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LETTERS OF A  
GRANDMOTHER



*By the same author*

LIFE IN A NOBLE HOUSEHOLD  
THE RUSSELLS IN BLOOMSBURY





SARAH DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

# LETTERS *of a* GRANDMOTHER

1732-1735

*Being the Correspondence of Sarah,  
Duchess of Marlborough with her  
granddaughter Diana, Duchess of  
Bedford*

Edited by

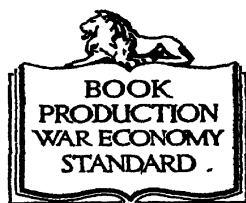
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SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

*Frontispiece*

*From the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller*

CEILING, *circa* 1662, AT WOBURN ABBEY

*To face page 36*

ANNE, DUCHESS OF BEDFORD, AND AFTERWARDS COUNTESS  
OF JERSEY

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*From the painting by Charles Jervas*

DIANA, DUCHESS OF BEDFORD

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*From the painting attributed to Thomas Hudson*

## P R E F A C E

THE letters — those sent by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough to her granddaughter, Diana, wife of John, fourth Duke of Bedford — upon which this book is based, are contained in three volumes included in the series at Woburn Abbey which comprises the MS. political correspondence of the fourth Duke, as collected and edited by Lord John Russell, afterwards first Earl Russell. Owing to a very misleading note, and in spite of the fact that Charles Greville saw the letters at Woburn in 1841, it was for long assumed that the volumes labelled Duchess of Marlborough held not original letters, but merely transcripts. When this error was discovered the late Duke of Bedford gave permission for extracts from the letters to be included in my book *The Russells in Bloomsbury* and added permission for the letters themselves or sections of them to be published as a separate volume. Since his death, this permission has been most kindly ratified by the present Duke and I have to thank him for allowing me the continued use of the MSS., and for his leave to reproduce the four photographs in the book.

In these days of necessary economy in paper it would not, in any case, have been possible to include all the letters. A certain number, therefore, and parts of others, have, as indicated in the *Introduction*, been omitted. In those which have been used, spelling and, as far as possible, punctuation have been modernized. Otherwise they appear as written.

I am much indebted to friends who, in days of little leisure and many hindrances, have given me unrestricted help. I have had the benefit of Mr. Ralph Edwards's encyclopaedic knowledge of period furniture; Mr. H. M. Hake and Mr. C. K. Adams have been generous indeed in their response to my plea for assistance in tracing portraits and portrait-painters; Lord Herbert has sent me illuminating notes on his predecessors and their houses; I have to thank Mr. Charles Marshall for valuable information



## P R E F A C E

concerning Cheam and Miss I. Pressley for a most delightful and instructive morning spent with her in the Assembly Rooms in York; Professor A. E. Richardson knows how much of his time he has allowed me to take up in giving me the privilege of discussing Georgian architecture with him.

Professor J. E. Neale has read the book in manuscript; Mr. Owen Morshead, helping me too with the topography of Windsor Park, has read it in proof. To both I express my deep sense of obligation and gratitude. I add my thanks to Miss Jessie Cameron for also reading the book in proof and for making the Index.

I should like to be permitted to pay a tribute of recognition to the Council and the staff of the London Library for all they have done for their subscribers during these difficult times. To find, as did the latter, day after day, the same ready service as ever, was to learn what stability could mean, in a world which at the moment seemed singularly unstable.

Lastly, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Earl Spencer for his most kind and constructive interest while I have been completing the book.

GLADYS SCOTT THOMSON

London 1943

# FAMILY TABLE

## CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

(mentioned in this book)

of

JOHN AND SARAH CHURCHILL, DUKE AND DUCHESS  
OF MARLBOROUGH

### SON

John Churchill Died 1703.

### DAUGHTERS

Henrietta	Married Francis Godolphin, second Earl of Godolphin. Succeeded her father as Duchess of Marlborough. Died 1733.
Anne	Married Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland. Died 1716.
Elizabeth	Married Scroop Egerton, fifth Earl of Bridgewater. Died 1714.
Mary	Married John Montagu, second Duke of Montagu.

### GRANDCHILDREN

*Daughter of Henrietta, Countess of Godolphin and Duchess  
of Marlborough*

Henrietta	Married Thomas Holles, Duke of Newcastle. <i>Children of Anne, Countess of Sunderland</i>
Robert	Succeeded his father as fourth Earl of Sunderland. Died 1729.
Charles	Succeeded his brother as fifth Earl of Sunderland. Succeeded his aunt as Duke of Marlborough.
John	Father of the first Earl Spencer.
Anne	Married Viscount Bateman.
Diana	Married Lord John Russell, afterwards fourth Duke of Bedford. Died 1735. <i>Daughter of Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater</i>
Anne	Married (i) Wriothesley, third Duke of Bedford; (ii) William Villiers, third Earl of Jersey. <i>Daughters of Mary, Duchess of Montagu</i>
Isabel	Married William Montagu, second Duke of Manchester.
Mary	Married George Brudenell, fourth Earl of Cardigan.

## INTRODUCTORY

IN the year 1732, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, was seventy-two years of age and had been a widow for ten years. Some physical disabilities had crept upon her. She was, for one thing, subject to crippling attacks of gout. They were attacks which might have immobilized anyone less determined not to be immobilized. But, if her body had weakened, her mind was as alert as ever, and her interest in the world around her no less keen. In human relationships much of that interest was directed towards her grandchildren, and one group of these in particular.

Five of the children born to her and John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, had survived their infancy, a son and four daughters. But in 1703 the son had died, of smallpox, at Cambridge. And of the four daughters, all of whom had married, two also had died during the lifetime of their father.

In 1714, smallpox had struck down the third daughter, Elizabeth, who had been married to the Earl of Bridgwater. She had left a son and a daughter. But all too soon the son had died, at Eton, also of smallpox. The girl, Lady Anne Egerton, had been, after her mother's death, somewhat neglected — at least in the opinion of her grandmother. Therefore the latter had taken her into her own household to bring her up. But this young girl was not the only grandchild for whom Sarah was to take responsibility.

Lady Anne Churchill, the second daughter of the Duke and Duchess, a girl by all accounts of singular charm, and one greatly beloved, had been married, in 1699, when she was fifteen years of age, to Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland, as his second wife. She had given him during the next ten years four sons and two daughters, of whom the eldest, a boy, had died as an infant. Horace Walpole has drawn a picture of the young wife and mother in her dressing-room with her glorious hair — hair that was inherited from her mother — floating round her as she combed it, a gesture, said Walpole, intended to appeal to visitors

## INTRODUCTORY

whom she wished to influence. But Anne, amid her happiness, and she does appear to have been very happy, had always had a premonition of early death. She had been in her early twenties when she had written a letter to her husband, which she had directed was to be given him in the event of death overtaking her. 'Pray', she had desired him, 'get my mother, the Duchess of Marlborough, to take care of the girls and if I leave my boys too little to go to school; for to be left to servants is very bad for children and a man can't take care of little children that a woman can.' 'Yet', she went on, 'let them be your care should you marry again for your wife may wrong them if you don't mind.' It was the age-long cry of Alcestris:

*ἐχθρὰ γὰρ ἡ πῖσσις μητρὶά τέκνοις τοῖς πρόσθ', ἐχίδνης οὐδὲν ἡπιωτέρα*

Although delayed for a year or two, death was coming. In April 1716, when she was thirty-two years of age, Anne had died of what was named a pleuretic fever.

The blow to the father and mother had been overwhelming. Sarah, sorrowing passionately, had written to Lord Sunderland while Anne lay in death that not long since she had had a small piece of her daughter's hair — that lovely hair — cut off for her to preserve, but now might she ask, before it was put away for ever, for a longer lock; to which her son-in-law had replied that a lock of that 'dear' hair should be put on one side for her.

There had remained the children concerning whom Anne had written her letter. In the event she had lived sufficiently long to see her boys pass from babyhood into school age. The eldest, Robert, was now fifteen years old; Charles was ten years, and John eight years old. All three were at school at Eton. Of the two girls, Anne, the elder, may have been about thirteen or fourteen. The other was the six-year-old Diana, the baby of the family.

The Earl of Sunderland in his grief — and in spite of Sarah's later assertions there is no reason to suppose but that it was a very real grief — wrote to his mother-in-law concerning the baby, 'poor dear little Dye'. She on her side replied by proposing she should take the child as she had already taken over the care of her cousin Anne Egerton. Nothing was said as to the other

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Anne, the baby's elder sister. But little Diana, with the pearl necklace and the watch that had belonged to her mother and which the latter had especially desired she should have, was sent to her grandparents.

The child cannot have been in the house more than a week or two before the Duke of Marlborough had been smitten by palsy. It may have been that his intense grief — and he had grieved bitterly — over the third death among his children, had been in part responsible for the stroke.<sup>1</sup>

On his death, six years later, in 1722, only two of his daughters, therefore, had been living. The elder, Henrietta, who was married to the Earl of Godolphin, had become as the remainder in the patent of the dukedom had decreed *suo jure* Duchess of Marlborough. The younger, Mary, was married to the future Duke of Montagu. These daughters, however, were of no comfort to Sarah. With both of them, but especially with the younger, Mary, she had quarrelled long and bitterly. Nor had she perhaps taken any particular interest in their children, although later on she was friendly enough with one or two of them.

But in her immediate care had been the two girls, Anne Egerton and Diana Spencer. She had, too, kept a watchful eye upon the other Spencer grandchildren, Diana's brothers and sister, although she entertained for them a by no means uniform affection. With their father, the Earl of Sunderland, she had picked a series of quarrels, partly, though not altogether, on account of his third marriage.

But time had passed on. In 1732 the Earl of Sunderland was dead, so, too, was Robert, the eldest of the three boys. Charles, the second boy, had now succeeded to the title. He had also become heir to the Dukedom of Marlborough, for Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, had lost her only son and heir; and the next in succession were the sons of Anne, Lady Sunderland.

For the young Earl of Sunderland the grandmother had only a moderate affection; she had often been and was to continue to be, considerably annoyed with him. It was his younger brother

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *Marlborough and His Times*, iv, p. 639.

## INTRODUCTORY

John who was pre-eminently her favourite. John, otherwise known as Johnnie, was now twenty-two years of age, a young man about town, regarded by Sarah with an adoring — although on occasion an exasperated — eye.

Neither the Earl of Sunderland nor John Spencer were as yet married. But for their sisters Anne and Diana and also for the cousin, Anne Egerton, matches had been made.

The first to be married, in 1720, had been Anne Spencer. The bridegroom was William Bateman, afterwards created Viscount Bateman. For this girl Sarah had never cared. There had, it would seem, never been any question of taking her into her household, as she had taken the baby sister, Diana. And after Anne's marriage Sarah's relations with her grew more, not less, strained. She came in fact to look upon her as her enemy, believing and saying that in all family matters Lady Bateman's influence was always used against her. The marriages of the other two girls had been her particular care.

In 1725 Anne Egerton had been married to Wriothesley, third Duke of Bedford. He was the son of Wriothesley, the second Duke of Bedford, grandson of William, Lord Russell and great-grandson of William, fifth earl and first Duke of Bedford. Wriothesley, the second Duke had died, a young man under thirty years of age, in 1711, of smallpox. His widow, who had been Elizabeth Howland, daughter of John Howland of Streatham, had succumbed to the same disease thirteen years later. To the son and heir had come a great inheritance. By the marriage of William, Lord Russell to Rachel, daughter of the Earl of Southampton, the estate of Bloomsbury and of Stratton in Hampshire had been added to the Russell properties of Tavistock, Thorney and Woburn. Elizabeth Howland had brought with her the Howland lands in Streatham and Tooting Bec.

There remained Diana Spencer. Upon her, as she grew up, Sarah had lavished passionate affection, and gradually the young girl had become all in all to her. Then the time for marriage had drawn near. One of Sarah's projects had been, so wrote Horace Walpole, to marry Diana to Frederick, Prince of Wales. That

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scheme, said he, had been put an end to by Sir Robert Walpole. Another match which had been considered was with Philip, Earl of Chesterfield. But the bridegroom finally selected was Lord John Russell, brother to Anne Egerton's husband Wriothesley, Duke of Bedford. The marriage had taken place October 11th, 1731. The bride had a dowry of £30,000 down and was to receive another £100,000 on the death of her grandmother. She and the bridegroom were both twenty-one years of age.

Anne Egerton, married to the elder brother, had apparently made the more important match. But in the six years which had elapsed since her wedding no child had been born. When Anne's cousin Diana married Lord John Russell the latter was still heir presumptive to his brother. It may well be that Sarah hoped and believed that ultimately he would succeed him.

Diana had left her grandmother's house. But the old lady still saw, as she had intended to see, a great deal of her. When they were apart she often despatched two or three letters to Diana in a week. And she expected letters in return.

Sometimes Sarah wrote the letters in her own hand, apologizing, on occasion, not without reason, for the handwriting. With the gout in her arm and hand, as was the case, the manipulation of a pen cannot have been easy to her. At other times she employed an amanuensis. Before her marriage Diana had acted in this capacity for her grandmother. Now the latter made use of the services of one of her ladies-in-waiting.

The letters, written on the beautiful hand-made paper of the eighteenth century, in ink that still stands out black and clear, with here and there the glitter of a particle of the sand used to dry it, carry with them the flavour of Sarah's personality.

Very often the letters begin without any form of salutation at all. On other occasions the grandmother addresses Diana as Lady Russell — to later generations Diana would have been not Lady Russell, but Lady John Russell — or, afterwards, as Duchess of Bedford. But she had and used pet names for her also. The one name which she used most seldom, and then as a letter shows, only by request, was the granddaughter's Christian name.

## INTRODUCTORY

Anything and everything that interested Sarah at the moment was poured forth to the young girl. Family affairs, including financial matters, were a prolific subject for discussion. Apart, however, from not being of general interest, these discourses — and they were wordy discourses indeed — are frequently quite unintelligible as they stand, the more so because Sarah often uses a system of cyphers instead of names. This portion of the correspondence does not belong to the scheme of this book.

But Sarah also related to her granddaughter her experiences at home and abroad; commented, although not to any great extent, on political affairs; spoke of the books she had been reading; but above all, and almost as a main theme, discussed architects and architecture — houses, inside and out.

So she presented a series of pictures of the world around her as she saw it — and incidentally a picture of herself in old age — set forth in a flow of words which is not the less effective because unstudied. The words indeed, like the subjects as they came into her mind, often appeared to tumble one over another. But however involved the sentence or sentences there can seldom be any doubt of the meaning she intended to convey.

As she often began in haste, so she often ended. A number of the letters, and this applies equally to those dictated and to those written in her own hand, are left unsigned. This is not because they are copies of originals. Most of them have been despatched by the postal service; the postmark and sometimes a broken seal are there and the name of whoever franked the letter is inscribed too on the outer sheet. The omission of the signature may sometimes have been due to fatigue or even, when a letter had been dictated, to actual incapacity to hold a pen. But in other cases it, too, conveys a hint of Sarah's impetuosity. Indeed, she herself says as much when she speaks of writing or dictating a letter up to the last moment when company had come to dine or her coach was standing at the door.

The letters begin in April 1732, a few months after Diana's marriage. They end — save for one additional letter — with her premature death in the autumn of 1735.



## TWO HOUSES

IN April 1732, Lord and Lady John Russell, a married couple of six months' standing, were staying at Woburn Abbey. Their own small country house at Cheam in Surrey was undergoing alterations. This house with the surrounding land had been made over to Lord John Russell by his brother, the Duke of Bedford. The property had not long been part of the Russell estates, for it had come to the Duke as recently as two years before this time, devised to him by the reverend John Lumley Lloyd, whose family had held the manors of East and West Cheam for three generations. Dr. Lloyd had been Rector of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, from 1726 until his death in 1730 and, dying without a direct heir, had desired his Cheam estate should go to his noble patron.

To Cheam, one Monday in April, the second day of the month, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough repaired in order to inspect the house and grounds and observe what was being done by the workmen. It was one of those visits which she so greatly enjoyed, whereby she gratified her passion for looking over any building but more particularly one in which she had a personal interest.

To reach Cheam the traveller coming from London took the middle fork of the three into which the high road running south from the Standard in Cornhill divided at Newington. That road was quitted a mile and a half before Ewell was reached, at a spot whence a track ran across the common to Cheam, lying on the northern slope of the chalk downs. At this time the village boasted some three hundred inhabitants.

The house at which Sarah, after the journey over the common, arrived in her coach, stood in the centre of the village, on the site which two centuries later was to be occupied by a war memorial surrounded by flower beds. It was a brick house and

## TWO HOUSES

the more substantial part appears to have dated from the sixteenth century, reconstructed or adapted perhaps from an earlier building and having probably undergone further alterations on several occasions. Some sixty years after Sarah's visit — it was then no longer in the possession of the Russell family — it was pulled down. Nevertheless, destruction is not always complete; often something of the old — here part of a wall, there a doorway or window frame — is left and, embedded in a newer building or standing in a garden, recalls what was there before. Sarah saw a house, a century and more old, that was in process of adaptation for new owners. To-day the house is gone. But some things on which Sarah's eyes rested remain, to illustrate her tale of the day's outing, told in a letter to her granddaughter, dictated on the evening of her return, presumably to London and Marlborough House:

Monday Night  
April 2nd, 1732

I am come this moment from Cheam, where I found your letter, my dear Angel, and I do assure you I can't have a greater pleasure than a kind letter from you with an account that you are well.

The house was full of workmen, and the first thing I did was to go upon my crutches into the garden which is very full of flowers, a very innocent pleasure, but I think there is too many of them. And I don't at all admire those cradles, but in such a garden I would have all the borders stuffed thick with everything that is sweet, useful or that makes a show by the rarity of fine colours, and beds as broad as they are sown in, and little walks to go between that one might go round everything.

When I got into the house again, I was so weary that I couldn't go upstairs, but went into the room where I dined. I carried my dinner with me, and my drink, which I was sorry for afterwards, because my own dinner came first, and was not near so good as what your housekeeper got for me. The best pigeons that ever I eat in my life, and she and another gentleman there would force me to open two bottles of your wine, one of which was champagne, so very good that I was frail

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enough to drink three glasses, though I feared it would hurt me. She flew about and everything came so quick, as if it had been by enchantment. And in my life I never saw so well a behaved person as the gentleman was. I can't remember his name, but he was a very big man, and I find he has some business of the Duke of Bedford's at the house where his mother lived. He came there as he said by chance, which he was very glad of, to see what they were doing at the building, my Lord John's gentleman being at Woburn.

There is a lion in the court with something like arms upon it with a strange tongue hanging out of the mouth, which I fancy was the fancy of Mr. Lloyd.

What is doing to the house will make it mighty convenient and large enough, and though there is no great beauty in the situation of the house, considering 'tis within half a mile of the finest downs and best air in England and within two hours driving from London, I think it is a very pleasing habitation. And when you have quite finished it, I am sure you will like it better than anything that is done now by such as call themselves architects. I observed that the bricks were extremely good, better than I have seen anywhere, except those at Marlborough House.

When I was in my coach this fat man would carry me to show me the stables. I told him that his taking so much pains to please me, I looked on as a mark that he loved my Lady Russell. To which he answered, that there was nobody that did not love her. I think the stables stand in a mighty proper place, will hold as many horses and all that belongs to them as can ever be of any use to you. And I like the walls extremely. I never saw any before of that sort, and though I think they look as well as is necessary for that use, they told me they did not cost so much as brick walls. To conclude, I think there is sense and reason in this place.

Sarah does not say whether the dinner prepared for her by the housekeeper had followed directly upon the one which she had brought with her or whether there had been an interval between the two. The fine travelling canteens which have survived from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show the convenient

## TWO HOUSES

arrangements made for travellers to take provisions with them, and Sarah, like other people of position, had her own travelling plate; she left it in her will to Caroline, Duchess of Devonshire, wife of the third Duke of that name; but it is not now in the possession of that family and what became of it is unknown.

The substantially built gentleman who had received Sarah and had produced for her the champagne, the wine which since its introduction into England in the sixteen sixties had grown so greatly in popular favour, with its companion bottle of some unnamed wine, was doubtless a Mr. Theobald, bailiff for the Streatham property which the mother of the Duke and Lord John had brought into the family.

The garden about which Sarah hobbled with the assistance of her crutches had perhaps during the period of the change of ownership been allowed to run a little wild, so that the spring flowers had come up in too great abundance for her taste. Nor presumably was it laid out, as she would have wished, in the simpler form of the parterre which, not nearly elaborate enough for a really fashionable garden of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, had, nevertheless, especially in the early summer, when its plots were full of glowing fragrant flowers, been the delight of many a country gentleman for a century and more.

The cradles, of which she disapproved, may have been baskets in which flowers were planted; or they may have been the device to protect delicate plants, which had been described by John Evelyn in his *Kalendarium Hortense*, lately republished, as a mattress mounted on a cradle.

Beyond the garden the courtyard held a dovecot as well as the figure of a lion at which Sarah peered in some curiosity. The dovecot, a very beautiful specimen, was allowed to stand into the twentieth century. Now it has gone as well as the lion. But the history of the latter is known. It was a symbol of annoyance and frustration. The reverend John Lumley Lloyd had laid claim by virtue of a female ancestor to the barony of Lumley. Seven years before his death, that is in the year 1723, the case had come before a Committee of Privileges whose decision had gone against

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him and in favour of the Earl of Scarborough who had opposed the petition. Whereupon the disappointed claimant had caused to be erected in his courtyard a high pillar and upon it had placed a lion rampant with the customary display of tongue, which Sarah noted as she also noted what she called something like arms. This something was indeed nothing more or less than the arms of Lloyd impaled with Lumley on the mantle on the back of the lion. Once they had been painted in their proper colours. Now they must have been blurred and faint. But, set up in anger at the decision which had refused him the barony, they were the sign and token of the reverend doctor's Lumley descent.

Brick walls surrounded the garden and courtyard. They are known to have been originally twelve feet high and are thought to have been put up about the middle of the seventeenth century, so that when Sarah saw them they may have been some eighty years old. They were allowed to stand long after the house had had been pulled down; and of them enough remains, the beautiful quality of the bricks enhanced after another couple of centuries with the increased patina of age, to justify Sarah's admiration, bestowed however with a reservation in favour of those of her own mansion.

So, too, part of the stables survive. They stood to the north-east of the house. Sarah, persuaded to drive in that direction, when at the close of her day's outing she was already seated in her coach, found their appearance something new in her experience. But they dated back something approaching two hundred years. They had been put up, according to tradition and some indirect evidence which their appearance reinforces, towards the middle of the sixteenth century and had been constructed out of the squared blocks of chalky limestone known as clunch. This was even then the continuation of an old fashion, for the hey-day of clunch had been the later middle ages when it had been in popular use in districts, notably parts of the home counties, where the substance could easily be quarried. The prejudice of builders — it needed care in handling and protection from the weather — led towards its disuse, but nevertheless it continued to be employed

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throughout the sixteenth century in country villages such as Cheam where, drawn from the chalky hills, it was conveniently ready to hand.

So much for Sarah's opinion of the simple country house with its flower-garden; its courtyard with dovecot and slightly pretentious pillar; and the stables at a little distance away; the kind of house that with its surroundings could have been matched in, or just outside, many an English village or country town. Then her agile, critical mind turned, as she dictated her letter, to consideration of another house, a newly built house, to which she had also recently paid a visit. She had an object in telling her granddaughter what she thought of it, since she greatly feared that one of Diana's brothers, probably John Spencer, was going to indulge his fancy and make a purchase. And it was not the type of house that Sarah approved of any relative of hers acquiring:

And now I will go as far from that as is possible, and give you an account of a place that I am fearful you once commended to me. That is my Lord Herbert's house at Greenwich, which I do think 'tis designed that your brother should buy. And that is the most ridiculous thing that ever I saw in my life. The prospect upon the Thames is what people call fine. But it is too far from you to give much pleasure, and I have not a great deal in seeing once in a vast while a ship pass by.

One cannot help thinking soon after one gets into the house that it must have been built by somebody that is mad. Some of the doors in the house are made in what I call a triangle, at least I don't know how to describe it better, but it is extremely fantastical. And one of the rooms which is low-roofed and not much bigger than one of the Duke of Bedford's tables he dines upon when he receives company has four great stone pillars, which I suppose is because the Ancients had pillars to support magnificent large rooms that either wanted or at least appeared to want support. But these pillars take away what little room there is, and are plainly to support nothing.

Above stairs one of the best rooms has a passage taken out, not at all necessary to go into another room, but I suppose that it was to show an uncommon fancy or ingenuity, for

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instead of a partition or a wall it is divided with glass the same as is in windows from the ceiling to the floor, so that everybody that sits in the room sees those that go through the passage and they see those that sit in the room. And this I must acknowledge is extremely new.

But the alcoves for the beds to stand in are not less diverting, for they are so ordered that it is not easy to get into them but at the feet of the bed.

There is in the house a vast many wolf's and lion's heads and such sorts of curiosities made, I think, of what they call tobacco pipe clay. And there was one figure I believe my Lady Delawarr would have been mighty pleased with, because the nose was broke off. There was several things, I think they call them pediments, that don't join in the middle, which is left open to set a bust made at Hyde Park. There is likewise a great deal of carving and some gilding in this house, which I suppose may be to make some amends for the furnitures being only paper.

In the first entry into the house, which is very small, but where a forest chair or two would have been convenient 'tis filled up with several pedestals. But only one of them had anything upon it, which appeared to me like a broken misshaped stone. But upon enquiry, I was told it was something of great value, and if that be so I am sure I can furnish all the rest of these pedestals by sending to pick up some of the ruins of Holdenby that have lain so long upon the ground unregarded.

The front of this house is full of niches with heads put into them of such clay as I have described. It was the custom I have heard in the time of the Ancients to put into great palaces all the great men's statues that were their ancestors who had done noble actions, and that part of this building I conclude was to imitate that, but I durst not ask who those heads represented being resolved to observe the Spanish proverb and not to laugh till I turned the street. And I do assure you notwithstanding all this provocation, I behaved myself with the greatest decency imaginable the whole time I was there.

The house is that known as Westcombe House, Blackheath, and is said to have been built in 1730 or thereabouts. It stands about

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a mile to the east of the Queen's House, Greenwich. Whether it was built directly for Lord Herbert, later, as ninth Earl of Pembroke, to be known as the 'architect Earl', or for someone else, after which he acquired it, is uncertain.

For Lord Herbert three artists collaborated to make pictures of the mansion. George Lambert made a set of at least five paintings, showing different aspects of the house and including the view overlooking Greenwich. To these paintings, in the possession of the present Earl of Pembroke, Hogarth, according to his anecdotes, added figures. Then Scott in his turn inserted the shipping. The view of the river as shown by Lambert, is so obviously restricted, while Scott has made the ships so small, that each reinforces Sarah's remark.

The house, as seen in the paintings, resembles, as the present Lord Herbert points out, a casino rather than a residence, and may have been built as a folly, that erection so popular in its day. The stone exterior with its red roof is in the strictly palladian style. But Sarah dictated for transmission to Diana the picture of an interior where classical design was treated with an elaboration for which Versailles had set the fashion. It was a fashion for which David Marot, the Frenchman who, in disgrace in his own country, had been brought to England by William the Third, was largely responsible, and which was used by both James Gibbs and William Kent. What designer had had a hand inside Westcombe House is unknown. But the plan of the rooms and their decoration was an example — perhaps, as seen through Sarah's eyes, a somewhat exaggerated example — of the style of the day. And it was a style for which Sarah had no use. To her way of thinking it had no merits, only absurdities, and in detailing these absurdities her acumen never failed her.

The pillars as she describes them were certainly not wanted for any practical purpose. These features of classical design could be and were being, used, in spacious saloons and in halls, so as to create stately and noble perspectives. The effect they produced in a small low room was, as Sarah noted with unerring eye, quite otherwise.



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The alcoves, with no space to spare around the beds, an arrangement of which she noted the inconvenience, were reminiscent of a french interior, as also was the quantity of carving and gilding. The carved heads of wolves and lions may have appeared, as William Kent often used them, on furniture, on mantelpieces or over doors.

But it was for the abundance, even super-abundance, of statuary in and outside the house that Sarah reserved her last and most pointed shafts. Collections of statuary, brought back from a foreign tour, or purchased by an agent on behalf of his patron, had long since adorned the houses of wealthy collectors; and pieces were still being so acquired. That on the pedestal in Westcombe House was possibly one such, and may, or may not, have been in truth a piece of importance. But Sarah did not care to see a pedestal supporting a piece of statuary, where, in her opinion a chair should have been — forest chairs, used in halls and upon which cloaks might be flung, were of the design presently to be adapted and beautified by Chippendale. Nor could she agree to admire something misshapen and broken. She left that to those who, like Diana's cousin, the Lady De la Warr, esteemed themselves connoisseurs and thought well of such a manifestation of the antique.

But devotion to Palladio and the classical tradition had led to more than a touch of exaggeration in the use of statuary. Nor was it necessary that busts and figures, damaged or otherwise, should always be brought from abroad. They could be procured in England, from such places as the establishment of Daniel Cheere at Hyde Park Corner. In Cheere's factory Roubillac was shortly to work; and there were turned out figures of all descriptions in the parian plaster to which Sarah referred as tobacco pipe clay, as well as others cast in lead to place in the gardens which, in their elaborate lay-out, were designed to go with the houses they surrounded. In short, as Robert Lloyd later declared:

And now from Hyde Park Corner come  
The Gods of Athens and of Rome.  
Here squabby Cupids take their places,  
With Venus, and the clumsy graces:

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Apollo there, with aim so clever,  
Stretches his leaden bow for ever;  
And there without the power to fly,  
Stands fix'd a tip-toe Mercury.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah would have fetched her pieces neither from Athens nor from Rome nor yet from Hyde Park Corner. She knew where she could pick up plenty of old stones on Churchill property, although those of which she was thinking must for the most part have represented derelict masonry rather than dilapidated statuary. At Holdenby, the estate in Northamptonshire, purchased by John Churchill, only ruins remained to show where once had stood the Elizabethan mansion, built by Sir Christopher Hatton, 'the last and greatest monument of his youth'. Here in a palace that was a prison, Charles I had been confined. And then, during the Commonwealth, had come destruction at the hands of a speculator, so that John Evelyn saw what was left 'showing like a Roman ruin' amid what had once been pleasure grounds with flower plots and little artificial arbours. Now even the ruins themselves had diminished, for they had served as a quarry out of which material for houses in the neighbourhood had been taken.

After a day's expedition the old lady had dictated in the evening a long, descriptive letter. She had the energy to add a note on an incident which had taken place in the House of Commons, one of the few allusions to political affairs which occur in these letters. But she admitted fatigue.

Pray with many thanks return my compliments to all around you for their kind remembrances of me, and because I remember the Duchess of Bedford once said the Duke liked some news I had sent him, I will venture to add to this very long letter what I thought very pretty.

Upon the day that the demand was to be made for the money to make good the deficiency which France should have paid to Denmark for their share of hired troops, Sir Robert Walpole moved to have the House cleared, that is I believe the Gallery. Upon which Mr. Pulteney said that he imagined that

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lloyd, *The Cit's Country Box*, quoted by Austin Dobson, *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, II, 82.

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gentleman was ashamed of what was going to be proposed or to that purpose. This gave such a shock to all Sir Robert's Knights Errant, that they sprung up at once as if they were going to make some great attack, but the Speaker interposed and called to the rules of the House, saying that what Mr. Pulteney had expressed was very harsh language. Mr. Pulteney asked pardon if he had made use of any expression that could give offence, he had been a good deal fatigued and did not at that time consider enough to make use of proper words, but what he meant was, that he himself should have been ashamed of making such a proposal, but for the future he should never believe that that gentleman could ever be ashamed of anything he did. This compliment Sir Robert answered very poorly, I thought, in replying, that he never had done anything in all his life to be proceedings against him. This put an end to that battle by Mr. Pulteney's observing the rules of the House, though at the same time what he replied was saying it stronger to Sir Robert than at first. I have many other wonderful accounts that I could give you, but that I am tired and fear you will be so too.

The letter ends thus abruptly with no signature. It is addressed to the Right Honourable the Lady Russell at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire and it has been franked by the member for Monmouthshire, John Hanbury, one of the executors of the Duke of Marlborough.

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AFTER the visit to Cheam, while the spring of 1732 was ripening into summer, Sarah was, at any rate for part of the time, at Marlborough House. But such reflections, caustic or otherwise, on the London scene, that may have passed through her mind, were not put into any letter that has survived in this correspondence. Nor had she anything to say of any expeditions, in or out of town, that she may have taken. She was in truth, as the three or four dictated letters sent to Diana during May and June show, ill at ease in mind as well as in body.

In the first place she was dissatisfied at the situation of that other granddaughter, Diana's cousin Anne, Duchess of Bedford. Sarah's relations with her, both before and after her marriage, had been of the usual — in Sarah's personal history — up and down variety. But just now she was defending Anne against her husband. That husband was, at twenty-four years of age, a very sick man and had recently been ordered to Lisbon, highly esteemed as a resort for invalids, more particularly those whose illness was of a consumptive type. Nor was it only the state of his health that was causing anxiety to those around him. In the three years since he had attained his majority the young man had contrived to dissipate the family fortunes to an alarming extent. What he did with the money has never been clearly ascertained. Part may have gone in high play; and there is some indirect evidence that he was unwise in his choice of associates and agents, some of whom had perhaps been responsible for, or at least had assisted in, the disappearance of money that should have been there and most certainly was not. There were debts too. Possibly the young man, suspecting that at twenty-four his day was nearly over, was past caring what had happened or was going to happen. But Sarah cared, on behalf not of the one granddaughter but of both grand-

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daughters. She did not forget that if, as now seemed highly probable would occur, the Duke died childless, his brother John would inherit title and estates.

'I have received', said the grandmother in a letter dictated at Marlborough House on May 13th:

a very melancholy letter from the poor Duchess of Bedford, who is dreadfully frightened with the thoughts of being forced out of England, her Lord having declared that he will take her with him and that he will go in a ship all the way to Lisbon, which may happen to be a very long voyage. Her constitution is extremely worn, and God only knows what may be the consequences of distresses which she may be in when in foreign countries, where she can have no advice which she can rely on with satisfaction. She desires my advice, but I don't know what to say, only that if I were in her circumstances I am very sure that I would not go.

I have always persuaded her to submit to everything in the world, and to live in any manner that her Lord would have her in his own house. And this is all I think that anybody can expect from her. She has taken my advice, and I know of no instance of any woman who has so much gentleness in their nature, as to submit to everything, as she has done under such terrible usage. I have advised her to tell her father how apprehensive she is of going abroad and that she believes (as she really does) that it will kill her, and to see what he will say or how far he will interest himself in speaking to her Lord to prevent what she is in so much dread of. And as the Duke of Bedford has always lived with her, he can't possibly have any pleasure in taking her with him.

The Duke made me a visit since he came to town and told me what he designed. To which I made no reply, but I will concern myself in this matter any way the Duchess of Bedford's friends shall think proper, and I am very clear in my own opinion, that after it has been tried in the ways that are thought most reasonable to persuade the Duke of Bedford not to take her out of England, that she should not hazard her life to go with so great a brute. The only question is, when this should be tried and by whom? I imagine that if he has taken the

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resolution for the reasons I suspect, nobody will be able to alter him. And whether the law will give him power to force her away against her will is the question? I know nothing of that, but I will enquire about it. At present I have said all that I can think concerning this matter.

While Sarah was thus viewing with displeasure the matrimonial affairs of one granddaughter, the approaching marriage of a grandson was causing her even more annoyance. Charles, Earl of Sunderland had now chosen his bride, and the choice gave great displeasure to his grandmother. The lady was Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Thomas, second Baron Trevor of Bromham, and granddaughter — herein lay the offence — of that Thomas Trevor, who had been an opponent of the Duke of Marlborough and whose name had been one of those on the list that Queen Anne had 'drawn out of her pocket' when she ordered the warrants to be prepared for the creation of twelve Tory peers to secure the acceptance by the Lords of the preliminaries of peace that were the basis for the treaty of Utrecht.<sup>1</sup> With the bridegroom's elder sister, Lady Bateman, the grandmother was very angry indeed, for it was she, declared Sarah, who had arranged the betrothal for her own ends. The wedding took place on May 23rd. Sarah was not present; nor was Lady John Russell, in spite of the representations of her sister; but John Spencer was there.

All this business was combined for Sarah with anxiety about the health of the beloved Diana. It was only too apparent that Lady John Russell, who was expecting a child towards the end of the year, had inherited to some extent her mother's delicate constitution. Sarah was perhaps still at Marlborough House when on June 24th she dictated another letter. If this was one of the occasions when she addressed the dear grandchild in formal terms it was not that she was feeling anything but deep affection for her:

June 24th, 1732

I give you a thousand thanks (my dear Lady Russell) for your very kind letter to me. And I am sure I can never have

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *The Peace and the Protestant Succession*, 1934, p. 189.

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any happiness in my life but in your kindness. My hand is better, but I have no strength in it yet, and I think my spirits are not so good as they used to be. But I have some hopes that the Scarborough waters may make my life a little more tolerable. You shall hear very often from me wherever I am, and I don't doubt but you will write to me as often as it is easy for you. For besides the pleasure of a kind letter from you, I love to know where you are and everything that you do.

I had a letter yesterday from the Duchess of Bedford in answer to mine which fixed her coming to me when I return from Scarborough. She says that her Lord does not go abroad till September, that he is mightily pleased with my letting her be with me and that if I should not come from Scarborough before he goes, he'll make no difficulty of letting her be at Woburn. I fancy by that her father is such a wretch that he does not care to take her for a little time, or, that she does not care to be with him, and I don't much wonder at either.

I find my Lady Bateman is a little sore at what she has done, by her telling those that knew nothing of the proceeding that her brother had acquainted me with his design of marriage in a very handsome manner before any of those letters passed between us.

I sent you some advice yesterday by the Duchess of Manchester, but I have no great opinion of her as to anything that is serious; and therefore I repeat it. I have a great dread of your driving a chaise, because I know the reaching out your arm to whip the horse is a very improper motion at this time. And I hope my Lord won't be affronted, if I say that I had rather have a sober groom lead the horse than have the greatest lord in the world drive you. What makes me so apprehensive of reaching out your arms, is, because I miscarried of a son myself from follies which I committed when I was very young, and you have not now but a few months to make it necessary to be very careful. I am more tenderly yours than words can express.

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to my Lord John.

The Duchess of Manchester was yet another granddaughter, she

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of whom her mother, then Lady Montagu, afterwards to be Duchess of Montagu, had written that 'Belle is at this instant in the paradisaical state of receiving visits every day from a passionate lover, who is her first love: whom she thinks the first gentleman in Europe and is besides that, Duke of Manchester'. The wedding had taken place that year, 1723, when she had been sixteen or seventeen years of age; but no children born of the marriage survived. Despite the bad relations between her mother and Sarah, she herself appears to have been, at any rate at this time, on fairly good terms with her redoubtable grandmother. As it happened the two were shortly to meet on a visit to a spa.

Angry and worried over the affairs of her grandchildren, Sarah was fighting physical disabilities in herself. As some remarks in letters of a later date show, she was troubled, on top of the crippling pains of gout, by attacks of scurvy. In the previous century that disease had scourged all classes of the population. To what extent its incidence was lessened during the first half of the next century is doubtful.<sup>1</sup> Allusions to anti-scorbutic drinks, including the use of the herb known as scurvy grass, continued to occur in household accounts and recourse was also had to natural medicinal springs.

Sarah had already visited Tunbridge Wells and Bath to take the waters. But for a cure this summer she had fixed upon a resort that was new to her, the spa at Scarborough.

The mineral waters which had brought the town into notice had been known of for a century and more, for the existence of the spring at the foot of the cliffs had been discovered by 1620 or thereabouts. At first the spa had enjoyed not much more than a local reputation. Then gradually its fame had begun to spread, and when, in 1660 Dr. Robert Wittie had published his book on *Scarborough Spaw* which, as the sub-title stated, was a description of the nature and virtues of the waters of the spring, visitors had begun to arrive at Scarborough, during the summer season, from all parts of the country. By the third decade of the eighteenth century, when the popularity of spas, both for treatment and for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. E. Drummond and A. Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food*, 1939, p. 309.



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amusement, was reaching its peak, Scarborough had taken its place alongside Tunbridge Wells and Bath.

Sarah was all for investigating anything and everything that was new to her. But, quite apart from her curiosity as to what this place now approved by the medical profession and by fashionable society was like, she had another, and a very sound, reason for choosing this particular spa for this summer's cure. The waters had been pronounced by the doctors to be sovereign not only for gout, rheumatism and kindred complaints, but also for diseases of the skin, especially the scurvy. And Sarah wanted, even if she could not hope for a complete cure of her troubles, at least alleviation of the physical miseries induced by both gout and scurvy.

Before starting off on her journey she went to her house called Holywell House, at the foot of the hill of that name, on the outskirts of St. Albans.

That house held many memories for her. It stood on the site of an older house which, with the ground around, had been part of the Jennings property, situated in and near St. Albans. To this property she and her sister Frances had been co-heirs. John Churchill had bought out Frances. Then he and Sarah had had the old house pulled down to build for themselves another which became pre-eminently their home.<sup>1</sup>

From Holywell House on the first Monday in July, the third day of the month, Sarah left for Scarborough.

For visitors to the spa who did not elect, as many did, to travel by one of the coastal vessels which left from Billingsgate, the direct and obvious route from London to Scarborough, was, whether in their own or in public vehicles, by way of the road to Berwick as far as York. Sarah's starting point, however, was not Marlborough House but Holywell House and in any event her choice of a route was in the first instance dictated by her determination to pay a visit on the way to Woburn Abbey, where the ailing Duke and his Duchess were just then in residence.

<sup>1</sup> 'For John this was home.' Churchill, *op. cit.*, I, p. 184. A water-colour picture of the house in the British Museum is reproduced in K. Campbell, *Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, facing p. 34.

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Sarah travelled, as can be inferred and as might be expected, in her own coach, using post horses. There is no indication how many attendants she took with her, save that one of the ladies who acted as her amanuensis certainly went, since the letters dictated on the journey are written in her hand.

Leaving St. Albans, the coach must have taken the main road — the Holyhead road — going through Dunstable and then descending the steep and, to heavy vehicles, extremely dangerous hill, later cut through, leading to what was presently to be Hockcliffe but then known, not unfitly, as Hockley-in-the-hole. At that village the coach would have turned off along the new turnpike road — it was one of the earliest turnpike roads in the country — towards Woburn. There, in its park to the north-east of the town, was Woburn Abbey.

Sarah had recently given unequivocal expression to her opinion of the owner of the abbey. He, who was now to be her host for a few hours, was by all accounts a nervous and querulous invalid. At the same time Sarah herself was full of aches and pains which were not likely to have been improved by the jolting of the coach. The long precipitous descent from Dunstable to Hockley was notorious for the nature of the shaking to which passengers in coach and cart were subjected. Under such conditions almost anything might have happened when the grandmother and the grandson by marriage met. But after all everything went with delightful smoothness. Sarah, after partaking of dinner and having made a very complete tour of the house, left for Northampton, where she spent the first night on the way. That same evening she dictated a letter:

Northampton, Monday Night

July 3rd, 1732

I am just come into this place, which is a terrible long journey from St. Albans, a great deal of the way being very jolting and I am so tired, that I would not write, but that in my last I told you, I would after I had been at Woburn where I dined to-day. And 'tis not possible for any man to behave better than the Duke of Bedford did in all respects. He spoke

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on every subject that offered with perfect good sense, was as civil as anybody can be without being troublesome and in the most obliging manner, not pressing any point too far and yet showing an inclination to have us stay at Woburn. If I had time and spirits I could tell you a thousand pretty things he said and there is nothing so amazing to me as to see a man that seems to have so much sense and yet to have made such a havoc of his constitution and of his estate. For I am told when he was last in town, he lost a great deal of money and added £6000 more to Mr. Johnson's debt, but what he has done for the securing anything, I could not learn.

I find that the people in the family think he is worse than he was, and I think so myself. But his eyes looked well and he would not own that he was not so. Yet I observed when we went into the Gallery to see the pictures, he sat down very often, which I conclude proceeded from weakness. I made him as easy as I could in everything, for I find he cannot endure to be thought ill, and therefore did not take any notice, that I saw it, but contrived to sit down often as we talked over the pictures.

He told me that he hoped to see you and my Lord John about the 15th of August and that you will stay with him some days. If so 'tis very probable that I may have the happiness of meeting you there. For he says he won't go from thence until the beginning of September. And I am to call there when I go home and from thence I will go to St. Albans to take possession of the Duchess of Bedford.

Some people think he won't be able to go the voyage he designs. But as he is young and had certainly a great constitution nobody can be able to say how that will happen. I am not able to speak one word more, but that I am, dear Lady Russell,

Most tenderly yours,

I had a letter from you when I was at St. Albans.

This letter is one of those not signed. The pain in her arm and hand may very well have been acute in the state of fatigue to which she admitted. Quite possibly, too, it was this fatigue that determined the next day's stage should be no further than Leicester.

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But having reached the inn in that town, whether or no she was still tired and still in pain, Sarah was not to be deterred from setting to work to dictate a second letter to supplement the one which she had sent from Northampton:

Leicester, Tuesday

July 4th, 1732

This place is called seventy-eight miles from London, but the miles are so long in this country that I am sure 'tis a great deal more and part of the way was so very jolting, that I think it is impossible for anybody that is with child to go through such roads without miscarrying, which made me think often of dear Lady Russell, and I should not have given you this account but to beg you would not go in bad roads for five months, and when there does happen to be any rugged way, I beg of you to make the coachman go very slow.

Coming in early this afternoon to this place I have time to say something more of the Duke of Bedford and Woburn. Upon my word his behaviour made him quite agreeable and it was impossible to see him in such a condition without being touched with some melancholy to think that a man who might have been so happy and have made so great a figure, if he would have made use of his understanding, should in so few years time bring himself into so sad a condition in all respects. He has done several things that has improved the park. But when Mr. Smith spoke to him to do something to one part of the house, saying it would fall, he answered he would not, for it would stand longer than he. And yet I saw upon many occasions, he endeavoured to make me think he was very well.

I went all over the house in a chair with short poles, and there is really a great many rooms in it, that are very good and might be made very agreeable, without a great expense. I am sure if it was my house, I would never pull it down, but I would alter several things in it by degrees and make it a better house than any architect can build now. And I do think that for a few thousand pounds it might be made a very noble and agreeable house; nay, I believe that which they complain so much of that it will fall might be mended. But foolish people,

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builders and workmen and some times stewards are always for pulling down because they get by it. And people that are young and have no experience are often drawn into extravagant expenses to make their house worse.

I resolved to have no fret work in my ceilings at Wimbledon, but only very handsome cornices. I have seen a great many lately and I think the Ionick is the best as well as the cheapest, but I shall change my mind in one thing, for there are two ceilings at Woburn that I think very pretty, because they are not done as they do them now, but the work not more raised than my Lady Delawarr would make an embroidered mantua. The rooms I mean, is that where the red velvet bed stands and the room next to it, which they call the breakfast room. The pattern is very small and pretty, but there are four great ugly things that come down deep in that room, but when I do mine, I'll leave that out, which is only to please the architect.

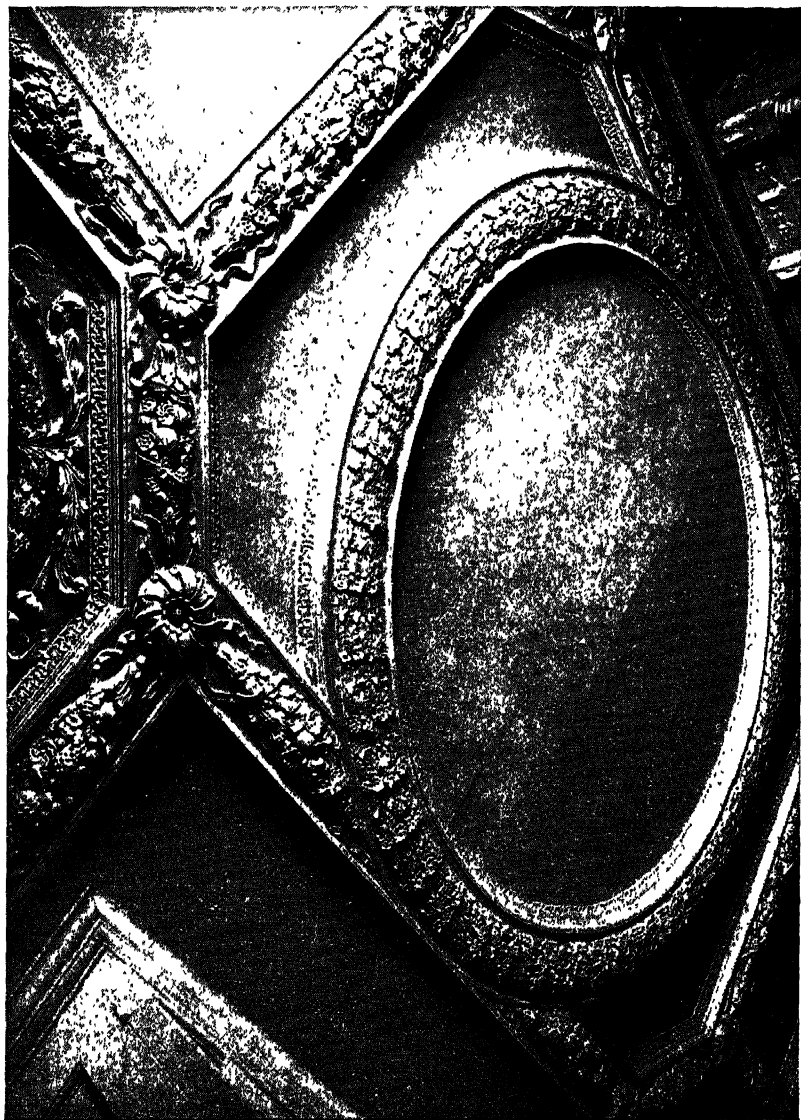
The Gallery has a great many pictures in it which are only valuable as they belong to the family and in antique dresses. But there is one picture of a Countess of Bedford that was charming. I mean her that the father forbid his son upon his death to marry. I really fear if I had been a man, I should have disobeyed my father in such a case, for she was both beautiful and good. On the other side it amazes me to think how a certain Lord could marry such a creature as one has done lately, as her picture has been drawn to me both of her figure and behaviour with the addition of a mean and most ridiculous family.

As I came through Northampton I met with one that told me by chance what I thought seemed very odd; that a man just married should choose to go in a chaise with his sister, and his wife ride by herself on horseback. This was to see a garden which I happened to stop at. I am afraid I shall tire you with my letters, and I will say no more till the next opportunity but that I am

Most affectionately yours,

I have not time to read this letter over, but I hope it is not nonsense.

The letter reads as if this had been Sarah's first visit to the



CEILING *circa* 1662 AT WOBURN ABBEY



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Abbey, and it is possible this was so. The house over which she looked was that which had been built between 1626 and 1630, on the side of the former monastery, for Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford; at the time when the family first fixed on Woburn as their principal residence. When, some twenty odd years after Sarah's visit, a great part of this mansion was pulled down to make way for a building designed by Flitcroft, that architect had reluctantly to accede to the commands of the erstwhile Lord John Russell, then fourth Duke of Bedford, and leave the old north wing intact; at the same time remodelling and reconstructing the west front rather than completely rebuilding it. In the north wing were the rooms concerning the ceilings of which Sarah had something to say. In the west front was the gallery along which she either was carried in her chair, or perhaps hobbled along leaning on a stick or crutch, with the young duke at her side, he dropping exhausted at intervals into a seat.

The red velvet bed, like the remainder of the furniture which was in the rooms on the ground floor of the north wing when Sarah was carried in, has long since gone; taken out perhaps when, as set forth in the accounts, the furniture which had been in the abbey was all carted away to make room for the elegant new furniture of the eighteenth century, as was deemed fitting for the reconstructed building. But the ceilings which Sarah saw are still there and in perfect preservation. The small, pretty pattern of the one with the plaster pendants is, like the design on the chimney-piece in the same room, a charming example of the restrained style of decoration of the early seventeenth century. Ceiling and chimney-piece are said to date and almost certainly do date from the time when the house was first erected. The ceiling in the adjacent room belongs to the time when, shortly after the Restoration, redecoration was being carried out at the abbey. The rich and finely moulded plaster work closely resembles that of two ceilings made by John Grove in 1662 for the Queen's House at Greenwich.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Scott Thomson, 'Rebuilding of Woburn Abbey in the Eighteenth Century': *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series, III, p. 163 n.



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Apart from her interest in the examination of any building — whether her verdict was favourable or unfavourable did not affect her interest — Sarah was always ready to use what she saw as an example or a warning. Just now she was deeply absorbed in a house which she herself was building.

In 1723, the year after the Duke's death, she had purchased the Wimbledon estate of Sir Theodore Jansen, whose directorate of the South Sea Company had ruined him. The estate included the manor of Wimbledon, with a half-finished house which Sir Theodore, in the hey-day of his financial success had been erecting on what was approximately the site of the old manor house, which he had pulled down. Sarah, in her turn, had ordered the half completed building to be demolished. Then she had asked Lord Burlington, in spite of her critical attitude towards him and his work, to draw up a plan for a new house. But the resulting structure, when she saw it in being, had not pleased her. It, too, had been demolished; and Lord Burlington had been asked to try again. This time he had achieved a measure of success and it was to the house now being built after his second design, that Sarah was devoting her time and attention.

Architecture at all times said more to Sarah than did painting — in which she was not alone in her age; and the ceilings at Woburn probably interested her a good deal more than did the pictures on the gallery walls; walls which were at that time panelled and the panels powdered with little gold stars. The collection of family, royal and other portraits, was as usual made up of excellent, good, mediocre and downright bad paintings. The only portrait which moved this sightseer to admiration can easily be identified as that of Anne, wife of William, fifth Earl and first Duke of Bedford, painted, in white satin dress with blue bows, on, so thought the late Sir Lionel Cust, the occasion of the marriage. That marriage, as Sarah had heard, had been brought about only by the steady persistence of the bridegroom in face of strong paternal opposition. For Anne was the daughter of that nobleman of doubtful reputation, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, by his wife Frances, not of doubtful, but of evil reputation indeed.

## JOURNEY TO SCARBOROUGH

Looking up at the portrait, close on a century later, Sarah saw what the stern father-in-law eventually came to recognize, the goodness and charm and simplicity of the girl who was the offspring of a singularly unpleasing union. It was quite in keeping with the normal working of Sarah's mind that a comparison with some unidentified recent bride should instantly be made, and not in favour of the latter.

This letter had also been left unsigned. Sarah was not yet half way to her destination and the two days she had already spent on the road had been weary going. The coach, bumping over the ill surfaced roads, would hardly have made more than the three to three and a half miles which was the average rate an hour. Moreover, she was perfectly right in her conjecture that the so-called seventy-eight miles between London and Leicester were in reality many more. The figure she mentioned was certainly that given in the old road books. But when, in the sixteen sixties Mr. John Ogilby was making, by the royal command, his great new road book, he had 'with great exactness and . . . mensuration by the wheel' perambulated every road. Thereby he had proved that the reputed distances of towns from the Standard in Cornhill and between one town and another fell short, in almost every instance, of the actual mileage. In going from London to Leicester, twenty miles had to be added on to the old figure of seventy-eight. Several editions of Ogilby's book, some of them in a convenient form for travellers, had appeared. Sarah, knowing apparently nothing about them, had, by her own observation, arrived in one case at least at Ogilby's conclusion. Not that she had begun her journey from London, but from St. Albans, a little over twenty reputed and twenty-one measured miles from the Standard. Also she had made the detour by Woburn. But, given the principal roads as they then ran, to proceed afterwards by Northampton and Leicester was a round-about way to reach York. How that city was attained eventually; along what cross road or roads the coach went after leaving Leicester; at what places it stayed for the two, or more probably three more nights in the course of the journey, there is

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

no evidence. The next letter to Diana was dictated at York on the Saturday:

York, Saturday  
July 8th, 1732

I hope, my dear Lady Russell, this will find you very well and that I shall have the satisfaction of hearing it from your own hand, when I come to Scarborough which will be upon Sunday at noon.

I might have been there this night, but for the curiosity of some of my friends who had a mind to see some of the fine sights of this town. This is a tedious journey but if I mend my health so much by it, as to make it tolerable, it will recompense me for a great deal of noise and almost as much dirt in the Inns as there is in Germany.

I am most tenderly yours,  
S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to my Lord John.

Sarah was perhaps a little hard on the inns — she never gives the name of any one of them — at which she had stayed. To compare something with its equivalent in Germany, the land through which she and her Duke had wandered, passing from court to court, during the years of exile, was one of her methods of condemnation. But according to others, the English roadside inn of the day was by no means lacking in amenities. Travellers of position, it is true, often took their own bedding with them — there is no evidence whether Sarah did so or not — but surviving bills for dinners and suppers suggest that the fare offered was of good quality and decidedly not lacking in quantity. But when Sarah wrote from York she had had five tiring days on the road since she left Holywell House. Nevertheless she embarked at once on sight-seeing. The next day, Sunday, she set off on the final thirty-mile stage of her journey and arrived at last at Scarborough in time to partake of dinner and afterwards to dictate a letter:

## JOURNEY TO SCARBOROUGH

Scarborough  
July 9th, 1732  
Sunday night

I got to this place to-day by dinner and I thank God without any ill accident, but it has been a very long and tiresome journey.

I intend to begin with one glass or two of the waters to-morrow morning; if I have so much success in these waters as to make my life tolerably easy, that will be worth the pains I have taken, as long as one must live. But whether life is long or short, I think 'tis a very indifferent thing to me.

I had the great pleasure of receiving your letter, as soon as I lighted, dated the 2nd of July and this is the fourth I have written to you, since I left London.

I think the best advice I can give you as to finishing any house, is to look upon the buildings of my Lord Herbert's or Burlington's, the last of which I think is yet more ridiculous than the first, because his cost an immense sum of money and has nothing in them either handsome or of any use.

I stayed at York some hours longer than I designed, to see the cathedral of that place; and the room that my Lord Burlington is building for an assembly by subscription. £5000 is collected already and they are £2000 in debt. I dare say it won't be finished under £20,000 and consequently that it will never be done. For the subscribers, I hear, are extremely weary of it, which I don't wonder at. For it exceeds all the nonsense and madness that I ever saw of that kind, and that is saying a great deal. It is 98 feet long and 36 wide between the pillars, of which there are 44, which stand as close as a row of nine pins. Nobody with a hoop petticoat can pass through them. Three feet is the breadth behind the pillars on each side, which is of no use but to take from the breadth of the gallery, which is much too narrow for the length. This is a room to play in as well as to dance, but the windows are as if 'twere a prison and so high that you can't open them to let in air without high ladders. The room is 30 feet high, and there is a gallery for people to see the dancers, which is so very high that they can see nothing but the tops of their heads.

The church is a gothic building the finest that ever I saw, a vast deal of what they call architecture, which is nowhere so

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

well as in a church. But the proportions are so exact, that 'tis a pleasing thing to see, tho' very much out of repair.

This is all that I saw at York worth mentioning, but it is a very great city.

At this time York was at the peak of its importance as a social centre. Many of the gentry from round about preferred to find such a centre in their own district rather than have to go south; the more so since the majority of them represented a traditional antagonism to, even while they were not prepared to move against, the Hanoverian dynasty. In arranging for the erection of the Assembly Rooms Lord Burlington was gratifying at one and the same time his passion for building and his wish to give York a meeting place whither, after the manner of the day, residents and visitors might resort, to gossip, to play cards, to listen to music and to dance.

The plan was for a principal room or hall, around which lesser apartments were clustered. Drake, the York antiquary, described how the design for this hall had been taken by 'that truly English Vitruvius, Richard Earl of Burlington', from Palladio, who in giving the plan said it was never executed out of Egypt. Hence the name of Egyptian Hall, by which the hall, thus designed, became known.

But when Sarah looked in at the building and cast an appraising eye around, the whole was by no means complete. Some of the lesser rooms may still have been in process of construction and certainly lacked the fireplaces, whose overmantels, like the pediments of the doors, were ultimately to be enriched by the graceful carving which was one of the glories of the architectural age. To the hall itself was to be added another example of the decorative art in the shape of the great chandeliers with their pendant lustres. These, said Drake, recording their first appearance, four years later, in 1736, were of quite extraordinary magnificence. What Sarah saw, in 1732, was a hall without these adornments, not even completely finished otherwise, but showing — as it was always to show — quite clearly the weak spot in the design, and one upon which she promptly put her finger — a kind of conges-

## JOURNEY TO SCARBOROUGH

tion caused by the crowding together of the pillars, the narrow passage ways, and the windows high above the heads of persons on the floor<sup>1</sup>. The gallery is not in being and may perhaps have been removed even before the hall was completed. A mid-eighteenth century picture of that assembly place gives no hint of any gallery being there.

As for the cost, Sarah perhaps exaggerated in placing it quite as high as she did, but Drake pointed out that the expense had considerably overrun the proposals to the subscribers, which had been first for £3000 and then for £4000.

Sarah noted that the cathedral was in need of repair. Two years later, as reported by Drake, work on the exterior had been put in hand, and a new pavement designed for the interior by William Kent under the direction of the English Vitruvius. But whatever damage had been wrought by time and weather, the Minster stood as John Evelyn had seen it: 'a most entire and magnificent piece of Gothic architecture'. So also Sarah saw it. And added one of her most characteristic, shrewd, succinct comments. Architecture for architecture's sake had, she could agree, its place in such a building as York Minster. For the passion of architects for line and composition which too often, in houses designed as dwelling places, subordinated comfort and convenience to appearance, she, her judgment based upon common-sense<sup>2</sup> rather than on canons of art, had nothing but scorn.

Her letter was not yet ready to fold and seal. She had some words to say, as was not unusual, concerning the behaviour of members of her family. 'I saw', she remarked, 'a calash waiting to carry your brother John somewhere, when I came out of Marlborough House, and I fancied he was going into Hampshire.' And just now she was far from pleased with John, chiefly for having attended his elder brother's wedding in face of her disapproval of the bride. 'I am sorry', the letter continued:

that neither his head nor his heart made him act otherwise

<sup>1</sup> Also, as pointed out in J. A. Gotch, *The English Home from Charles I to George IV*, 1918, p. 214, one end of the room was so elongated as to make the length of the whole quite out of proportion to the width.

<sup>2</sup> 'Her almost repellant common sense.' Churchill, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 693.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

than he has done to me. And since you name the word obligations, I must own, I can't think that he has ever had any considerable but to me. For if I had not designed to make him my heir, surely my endeavour to have educated him well, my manner of living with him, the tenderness I showed him on all essential occasions was in reality a greater obligation, even than an estate. And till he came to be settled in the world, whatever he spent more than his own and the helps he had from me could be of no advantage to him and if I had not known that to be so, I should have liked to have done more for him in my life time, just as well as at my death.

As to my Lady Sunderland, I can say nothing of my own knowledge, but she has very different characters given her. Some people say, she is simple, ill-bred and knows nothing of a right behaviour. Others that she has a termagant spirit and is ill natured. And some say that she has a great deal of sense and that she will disappoint my Lady Bateman as to her design in this marriage, which was to govern her brother and all his finances. Nothing but time can show who judges rightest, but for my own part, I do believe that my Lord Sunderland, who is certainly a very weak man, will always be governed by his sister. And as he does not love his wife, Lady Bateman's artifices will get the better, and she will keep her post at the expense of making her brother in a little time live ill with his wife.

I know one that sat near these two ladies at the red riband show who said my Lady Bateman took her sister by the hand several times in that great assembly like a fond lover: which looks as if she intended to manage her as long as she can. Writing upon this subject, I say what I hear, though I am very indifferent what they do, being very sure I shall never see either of them unless it be by chance in the street.

I have not been here long enough to tell you anything of this place. I am, with more tenderness than words can express, my dear Lady Russell,

Yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

I met the Duchess of Manchester on the road, and she dined with me here to-day. She intends to drink the waters.

My humble service to my Lord John.

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

At Scarborough Sarah established herself in apartments. Thirty-seven years earlier Celia Fiennes, in the course of her journey through England on a side saddle, had visited Scarborough and had remarked that there were very few inns there and those for the most part poor. By 1732 there had been great improvement both in number and quality of these places and many of them were serving meals to which the visitors resorted. But few visitors, if any, were as yet staying in these predecessors of hotels. How soon the inns began to offer what might be called residence as against purely travellers' accommodation is a little doubtful. Probably in what was pre-eminently 'the Spa' — that watering place in the Low Countries so often visited and so well thought of by the English nobility — the custom of living at an inn began a little earlier than in England. In Scarborough in 1732, Sarah, in common with the other visitors, was in lodgings.

The first days did not go very well. Sarah was much disappointed at not receiving a letter or letters from Diana after the one she had found awaiting her on arrival. She conceived a poor opinion of the town in general — the comparison was once again with her experiences in Germany — finding it both noisy and dirty; her lodgings, the situation of which she never gives, she declared to resemble the town itself in this respect; and of the arrangements at the spa itself she thought poorly indeed:

Scarborough, Tuesday

July 11th, 1732

I am in expectation when the post comes in of hearing from you to-day, my dear Lady Russell, but having nothing to answer of yours, I will begin with some account of this place, which is the worst that I ever saw in England. I have been at the place where they assemble to drink the waters, very different



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

from Tunbridge or the Bath, very dirty and expresses vast poverty in every part of it. It is besides so extremely steep and disagreeable to get to either in a coach or chair, that I resolve to go no more, but to take my waters at home. But there was one thing I saw to-day which is such a curiosity that I must tell you of it. There is a room for the ladies' assembly, which you go up a steep pair of stairs into, on the outside of the house, like a ladder. And in that room there is nothing but hard narrow benches, which is rather a punishment to sit upon than an ease. When the waters begin to operate, there is a room within it, where there is above twenty holes with drawers under them to take out and all the ladies go in together and see one another round the room, when they are in that agreeable posture, and at the door, there's a great heap of leaves which the ladies take in with them. This sight I am sure, diverted the Duchess of Manchester extremely, but it made me very sad. And I came home as fast as I could for fear of being forced into that assembly.

I brought very good drink of my own, and was told I should have mighty good fish and mutton, but I have yet seen none that is so good as at London, and I believe upon the whole the place is worse than Hanover.

My Lord Chesterfield is here and he told me my house was the envy of the place, but I think it a very bad one, very dirty and so noisy that I am going to lay straw in the street before my house to hinder the intolerable noise of the horses and coaches that go by my window.

I have seen nobody yet that I know, but my Lady Gertrude Hotham and my Lord Chesterfield, who are both extremely well bred and if anything could make this place tolerable, it would be their agreeable conversation.

My Lord Malpas is my next neighbour, but I hope he won't come to me, for I am sure he is a most disagreeable creature. I think I did not tell you that I had had a visit from my Lord Cooper. He was so extremely civil as to bring me a favour, which is so extraordinary in this modern way of breeding that I was surprised at it, and asked one that is acquainted with him, how he came to think of an old woman who was of no manner of use, to which I was answered that he loved me because I had been his father's friend. This is likewise a different

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way of thinking from the present age. He is an extremely modest young man, and seems to have good sense. Those that know him say he has a very good understanding and no vice. I think my Lord Grantham's daughter is a very lucky woman to be married to such a man, for it is certain she has no great title to sense from either side of her family, and had but £10,000. I wish for his sake she may prove good and reasonable, for nothing is more terrible than to be married where either sense or virtue is wanting.

The post is come in, but no letter from you and therefore I will say no more, but that I am most affectionately yours.

S. MARLBOROUGH

The Lady Gertrude Hotham was sister to Lord Chesterfield. The Lord Malpas, heir of the second Earl of Cholmondeley, was Master of the Horse to Frederick Prince of Wales. William, second Earl Cowper, had been married but a fortnight before to Henrietta, youngest daughter and co-heir of Henry D'Anverqueque, Earl of Grantham. Whether he and his wife were also in Scarborough at this time, or whether, as seems more likely, Sarah had suddenly recollected she wished to tell Diana of a call he had paid her at Marlborough House, is not clear. On his father's account Sarah might well have been disposed to look on him with kindness, for when she, a fallen favourite, had perforce quitted her apartments in St. James' Palace for Marlborough House it was the first Earl Cowper, alone of the Whigs, who had called on her: 'the only Whig that behaved himself like a gentleman to me' wrote Sarah.<sup>1</sup>

Whether justified or no in her other criticisms — Lord Chesterfield for one does not appear to have agreed with her judgment of her own lodgings, unless he were exercising the polite tact he knew so well how to use — Sarah was probably doing Scarborough something less than justice in the matter of food. It may be presumed she dined in her own apartments, since she is quite emphatic in her expressions of abhorrence for all the public

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 117, quoting from the Althorp Papers. Cf. also Churchill, *op. cit.*, IV, 324. The second Earl Cowper married, as his second wife John Spencer's widow.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

resorts of the town. But many visitors partook of dinner at all events, at one of the numerous inns, which included the New Inn, and the Globe, both of which, like others, were now reported to offer excellent ordinaries. Or more fashionable was the dining-room attached to the famous Long Room of the spa. This was directed by Mr. Vipont from The Wells at Hampstead, and when the company dined about two o'clock, was served, according to enthusiastic local advertisement, food dressed in the most elegant manner by cooks from London, rabbits in the utmost perfection, mutton at least equal to that bred on the Banstead Downs, the finest fish; and poultry supplied by the poulterer who came from London. That panegyric may be a little over done; but the evidence of other visitors, including that somewhat earlier of Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe, is against Sarah. In particular Scarborough fish was celebrated; such fish, wrote Defoe, as he had hardly seen the like, turbot, herring, mackerel, cod and whiting.

All the time Sarah was watching for a letter from Diana; was very perturbed when none arrived, and told her granddaughter as much.

July 14th, 1732

I am a good deal mortified at the post being come in, without any letters from you, dear Lady Russell, and sometimes I apprehend that you are not well. This is the sixth letter that I have written to you, since I left Woburn, and I have directed them all either to your house as you bid me in Grosvenor Street, or to the butcher at Winchester, which I thought the best of the two directions. Because adding by the way of London, I thought was surer than sending it to a servant in town, who might be sometimes out of the way.

When you write to me, I think you had better not frank Manchester, because he is here. I have been here so little a time, that I can't expect to find any alteration in my health, as to my amendment. And yesterday I was a good deal out of order, but am now better.

The place where they drink the water is so horrid, that it is impossible to go to it, and I believe these waters have the same

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

effect, wherever one takes them. I believe this terrible journey will end in only seeing a great quantity bottled up and taking them to drink at some of my houses, which will be a sad conclusion to go four hundred miles over places I believe worse than the Alps, only to fetch water. There is no company here that one would not choose rather to be deaf and dumb than to be with them. Except my Lady Gertrude Hotham and my Lord Chesterfield, and they are both charming. But one can't see them often enough to recompense me for what I go through. I will not go about to make any description of this place, because if I should, you will not believe it possible to be true. I am most tenderly yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Mr. Hanbury had a narrow escape of breaking his neck going down to the wells by an overturn from the precipice, but I thank God he is now well.

Not to hear from Diana when she expected to hear was a real trial to Sarah. Letters sent from London to Scarborough should have come with fair regularity. The postal service to the north, passing through York, and dating from the days of Henry VIII, was one of the longest established in the country, although that of the Dover Road claimed proud pre-eminence as the oldest of all. From York, since the end of the seventeenth century, one of the cross road post which were then inaugurated had been running to Scarborough and Whitby. But when letters were despatched elsewhere than from London, or from any principal town on a recognized postal road, delay often occurred. Moreover, another cause of delay was the lack of method in delivering the letters. In London, and again in some of the more important towns, letters were, as endorsements on the outside show, generally addressed to the correspondent's own home. But elsewhere, they might be sent to some recognized address — as Sarah sent one of hers to the butcher in Winchester — to be called for. Others, again, would be directed to remain with the postmaster until fetched. Amid all these diversities, the passage of a letter from one correspondent to another was subject to many hindrances; and Sarah

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did not take kindly to hindrances. Annoyed, and feeling far from well, she found that neither the fashionable crowd, with two exceptions, of her fellow visitors at the spa, nor yet the spa itself improved upon acquaintance. Possibly she would not have minded very much had the place been overborne by calamity. It might have happened. The accident to Mr. Hanbury, who with his wife had perhaps travelled to Scarborough with Sarah<sup>1</sup>, was due to one of those movements of the cliff which five years later culminated in a fall of such magnitude as to bury the spring of water for some time.

However, during the course of the next week, life in Scarborough began to appear slightly more tolerable. She commenced to derive some benefit from the waters and two letters from Diana arrived simultaneously. From them the grandmother learned that the granddaughter was to pay some visits in the west country, including one to the Russell property at Stratton in Hampshire, now, like Cheam, assigned to the use of Lord and Lady John Russell, and another to the home of the Herberts at Wilton. Diana had also presumably had something to say concerning the newly acquired sister-in-law:

Scarborough

July 21st, 1732

I received your letters, dear Lady Russell, of the 8th and 11th together on the 16th, which was the post day to acknowledge them, but as you say in that of the 8th that you are going a progress and shall not be at Cheam till the 27th of this month, though I begin to write, I believe I shall not be in haste to send it, thinking it won't find you till you come to Cheam.

The account I wrote to you of Lady Sunderland was what I was told, but I dare say your judgment of her is more likely to be a right one, than theirs. Awkward motions in the hands and arms are disagreeable, but I wonder how she comes to have so easy and right a behaviour, who has always been used to low and ordinary company. I should think that must proceed from what I was told by one, that she has sense. I am not at

<sup>1</sup> See p. 61.

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all surprised at her being pleased at the great change of her condition nor of his being so fond of her at first, who has certainly so nasty a constitution. I remember that he was once so fond of Mrs. Smith, that some people fancied he would marry her.

How long the honeymoon of this match will last nobody can tell, but I believe Lady Bateman, as long as she can govern, will contribute to it all she can. For changes of that sort will cost money. And, perhaps, make it more difficult for her to be gratified with it and with presents for some years at least, but a little sooner or later nature will break out, and for my own part if I were a young woman and was in circumstances to choose my lot, I had rather marry a man of sense with good morals than the Emperor of the world, that was a brute and a fool.

My Lord Sunderland can't be called strictly the last, for as he speaks very little he imposes upon some, but his letter and behaviour to me has given a full proof that he has no nature nor true principle of honour. And since he had money in his power, he has never disposed of any, that I have heard of, with any judgment; nor has he governed himself in any one action by the rules of reason.

He seems to be very fond of his person, though not a very pleasing one, and to bestow a good deal of time upon dress, and which is not a great commendation, even in our weak sex. And if one could see an account of the money he has spent and taken up in a short time and how he has disposed of it, it would appear very ridiculous to anybody of sense.

In short, he is so weak a man, that even those who have no good characters and very indifferent understandings can impose upon him. He seems to be very proud, and to think that if he makes a great expense, that is being a man of honour, but he wants all that I think necessary to support that character.

I remember when he was a very great boy, he had burnt the hair of his head almost down to his forehead. I was frightened at it and asked him how it came in that condition, and who had cut it to hide its having been burnt, but he stiffly denied that it was either burnt or cut saying for half an hour together till I was tired and let it drop, that he knew nothing of it. It is a very bad sign of the nature of a boy when he will so obstinately deny the truth, and in this there was a great addition of

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folly, as well as the falsehood of it. And at Windsor Lodge he told the late Lord Sunderland, his brother, that he lied, who had been so very kind to him. These things I had forgotten till his monstrous usage to me put me in mind of them. A great deal of time he passed at school and in learning, though it can scarcely be called either, writing or reading well. How much better would it have been, if that time had been spent in teaching him principles and what returns are due to a good parent and friend. I doubt you won't like the subject of this letter, but it is all true and my relation is as near him as yours. And if he were my only son, I would not love a simple nor an ungrateful man, both which he certainly is.

I believe you will think Wilton a very fine place, and might easily be made everything that is agreeable, but I hear my Lord Herbert (who is often mad and always very odd) talks of pulling it down when his father dies. I am glad the roads are so good where you go, and I believe being in the air and on good ground will do you no hurt.

I cannot judge of the part of Woburn, which you say will fall down, having had several props, but if it be ever my Lord John's, I wish he would take advice upon it, by those who can't get by building it new. And if it must be pulled down, I fancy it may be built up again, so small a part of a great old house, without the help of an architect, for I know of none that are not mad or ridiculous, and I really believe that anybody that has sense with the best workmen of all sorts could make a better house without an architect, than any has been built these many years. I know two gentlemen of this country who have great estates and who have built their houses without an architect, by able workmen that would do as they directed which no architect will, though you pay for it. If I live to proceed in what I am about, I intend to take this method myself, in building a hospital for distressed people of several sorts.

As I came to this place, I came through the Duke of Kingston's park, where there is a house that makes a very good appearance, on the outside, for I did not go into it. But that was done by Sir Christopher Wren, and the offices were in a manner that I like better than any I have seen, not wings, for they are very seldom set on agreeably, only to make a show and

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sometimes inconveniently done. But at this place, there is a very large building for servants and all manner of offices put so near the back of the house that the meat may be brought into it as easily as from wings; which prevents all stinks and noise of every kind. And there's an extreme fine building for stables at a very right distance which you see and looks extreme handsome.

I have taken these waters but seven days and the itching that tormented me so much, which was from the scurvy, is almost gone, which I am sure could not have been done with any physic without weakening me extremely, but I very much fear that I will not recover much strength as to my limbs. However after taking so long a journey, I will have patience to stay here, whilst I have any hopes of their doing me any further good. I am glad to hear that you are not tired with my long letters, otherwise I should burn this instead of sending it, who am very affectionately yours.

S. MARLBOROUGH

Lord Herbert, concerning whose house at Greenwich Sarah had already expressed to Diana her unvarnished opinion, was to succeed his father as ninth Earl of Pembroke in the following January. But he did not fulfil Sarah's gloomy prognostications and pull down Wilton. He did make certain alterations. 'The towers, the chambers, the scenes which Holbein, Jones and Vanduyck had decorated, and which Earl Thomas had enriched with the spoils of the best ages', wrote Horace Walpole 'received the last touches of beauty from Earl Henry's hand.'

The Hospital, the building of which she had in contemplation, took the form of almshouses for eighteen almsmen and as many almswomen. These she presently erected, with or without the assistance of an architect, in the parish of St Peter in St. Albans, the parish in which her own house stood; and were handed over by her, by deed dated June 2nd 1736, to trustees.

When Sarah commended the plan of the mansion of the Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull, she was harping once more on her favourite theme. Here was a house built, in her opinion, on



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sound practical lines. The same could not, she implies, anticipating here later opinion, be said of the design, so popular with the architects of the day, which placed kitchen and stables in opposite wings either side of the main block of the house, sometimes connected with it by colonnaded passages. Hereby could be produced a splendidly grouped building, most pleasing to the eye; but one which was, as a dwelling-house, highly inconvenient for practical purposes, the stables too close at hand and the kitchen premises too far away.<sup>1</sup>

As Sarah most truly remarked, this had been one of her longer letters but even as it was about to be sealed she had a most pleasant surprise which necessitated a postscript:

Before I could seal up this letter, which is already too long, I have received yours from Rookley dated the 16th for which I must thank you and add a little more to what I have said. As you have received my letter from York, I don't doubt you will have received all those I have writ since, long before this comes to your hands; by which you will see that we got safe hither and that I am not the worse for the journey, tiresome as it was. I am glad that you are pleased with those you make.

I have seen several houses of Inigo Jones's but no one that ever I liked entirely. By which I find the architects of former times had some whims, but our present architects endeavour to imitate ill whatever was useless in their buildings and add nothing but what is ridiculous of their own. And I observe one aversion they have, which is light, and that is the reverse of my inclination. My Lord Herbert particularly seems to dislike extremely windows in a room and yet at Blackheath he has made a wall of glass.

My taste is exactly yours as to the country and I am glad you have everything at Stratton you can desire. For the fine walks and trees would be my first wish, yet 'tis very agreeable to have fine downs near one's house. I did lie several days at Salisbury, when I went to see my friend Mrs. Burnett and I thought of Wilton just as you do. But I don't remember any statues that crowded the house and I fancy my lord Herbert has helped him

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. J. Gotch, *Growth of the English House*, 1909, p. 224.

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

to new ones from Hyde Park Corner, which my lord Pembroke now calls antique. But I remember there was wood and water in the garden and a very fine country to ride when you went out of their park. There was very little furniture when I saw it or hangings; but one piece in most of the bed-chambers against which the bed stood. And I think you missed the most curious thing by my lord's being absent.

I think, when one is as young as you are, it is very pleasant to go about with people one likes, to see everything. But for my own part I have not curiosity enough to go five miles out of my way to see even what travellers give such fine accounts of, if it can't be seen without trouble, or going over a precipice or lying in a dirty, noisy inn.

Sarah appears to have under-estimated both her taste for sightseeing and her capacity for indulging in it. The date of her visit to Wilton is uncertain and may have been some years back. Now, in this year of 1732, when Diana saw Lord Pembroke's mansion, nearly all the statuary had, says the present Lord Herbert, been collected; and the furniture by William Kent, the other state furniture and the hangings — all part of the glories of Wilton — were in their places. But Sarah was, he adds, not far out in her hit at the statuary which apparently she had not seen, for, wherever derived from, most of it was of indifferent quality. Also, it undoubtedly, he thinks, crowded up the rooms, for Wyatt's cloisters, built especially to hold the collection, date only from 1810.

Sarah's appreciation of the situation of Stratton and of the surroundings of Wilton, as she recollected it, recalls her appreciation of the house at Cheam, backed by the Surrey hills as was Stratton by the Hampshire downs.

All the letters sent to Diana from Scarborough so far had been dictated, and her grandmother had signed all except one. They are addressed to 'Lady Russell at her house in Grosvenor Street' and are again franked by Mr. Hanbury. On July 25th, when she had been a little over a fortnight in Scarborough, Sarah wrote for the first time in this correspondence a letter in her own hand:

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Scarborough, Wednesday

July 25th, 1732

I have just now received your kind letter, my dear Lady Russell, of the 20th, and I hope you will find by my letters long before you have this that I had received yours since I came to this place, and one before I left St. Albans, and this to-day makes six. I believe they will come very safe to me if directed to me at Marlborough House.

The letters are a long time coming, but after one has received the first letter, if you write regularly, the post comes in three times a week as it does to places near London, and it is a great comfort to hear often from one I love as I do you. You said in your last letter that I have now received six, so that if you did not mistake in the account there is one lost, and I remember you said in one of your letters to me that you had written but that you believed the person would not carry it to London time enough to go by the post, so that it is probable that is the letter that is wanting, and you may be very sure that I can't doubt of the truth of what you say.

I don't remember what I wrote to you of my being ill, and I am sorry that I said anything that could give you any apprehension upon my account, for I would never have you know one moment's uneasiness. I am as well now as you have seen me a great while, and I do believe these waters have done me some good and will do me more. They are certainly the best that I ever took, and there is nothing more wonderful than to take a purge three or four times a day without being dispirited or weakened in the least. I don't think of leaving this place till I have got as much benefit from the waters as I can hope to, and I am not so uneasy with the place and meat as I was, but I am sure I will never see it more after I leave it. I wrote a long letter to you by last post which I reckoned would meet you at Cheam.

Your desiring me to take care of myself for your sake is very kind, and I return it by assuring you that I desire to live only for you.

I made your compliments to Mr. Harborough, and I added some to Mr. Hanbury, who would otherwise have been mortified. He deserves all that you say to him, and I think she is

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

good in not being out of humour to be so long at such a strange place, so very disagreeable when she has nothing to do nor takes no water.

My humble service to Lord John. Company is come in to dine and I can't read my letter over.

This was followed up the next day by another, a dictated, letter:

Scarborough

July 26th, 1732

I wrote to you yesterday, my dear Lady Russell, and was in so great a hurry, that I could not thank you half enough for your kind letter, and though I hope to have another before the post goes out, I begin to write to you beforehand that I may be sure to have time enough. And I have a mind to tell you, that notwithstanding all the disagreeableness, which I have described of this place, I think I am better than I was and I design to endure it, till the horse races are over at York, which begin the 14th of August and last a week. And I can't go till it is all done because all the inns will be much worse as I go home, till all the company has passed through them and got to their own houses.

I am better satisfied with this resolution, because I am very sure I will never see Scarborough more, and if the waters happen to do me good, as they have the same effect in my lodging, as when I go to the well, I will have them bottled up carefully, putting oil upon the top and then wax upon the cork. And I do verily believe they will be very good to take at any of my own houses, which I will do if I live, for I am sure these waters are the very best in the whole world, for those that purging is good for.

I think I have told you that as to meat I have got better than I had, and now I will tell you how the day passes. The morning is the best, when I drink my waters and at dinner I have a very good stomach. Soon after that a little room is filled with visitors, most of which I never saw before, and to avoid having it as dismal as a funeral, in such a circle, I play at quadrille for half a crown a fish, which is well enough, for I can't win whatever I played for, and it makes it more easy to play than it would be to have more conversation.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

I was told yesterday that my Lord Burlington comes down to the York races and brings Italians and a great concert of music, which is to be heard in the room which he is building and which is not far enough advanced to have dancing in it.

This looks to me like a sort of artifice like the South Sea directions formerly to raise Stock. For nobody is to have a ticket to hear this music, but such as will subscribe to the building, which must be extreme uneasy to the ladies, either by making them stay at home or giving the money for the subscription, which they want to buy clothes. Surely my Lord Burlington must be a very odd man, to bring a great fortune of his own into difficulties by this passion of building and not only so, but to give himself the trouble of building for others, which I never heard of anybody that liked.

These races that are now got almost all over England do a great deal of mischief. I heard a gentleman say lately that the country was hurt more by them than by a land tax. For the horses make great havoc in the corn wherever they come, put all people of middling fortune to expenses, which they can't well bear, and all the young women lay out more than they can spare in hopes to get good husbands; which in generall ends in being debauched, or at least in making them not fit for other matches, which otherwise perhaps they would have got.

My Lady Lechmere is here and 'Sir Thomas Robinson. She talks reasonably and talks mighty soberly, but it is impossible to hear and see him without thinking she must have been mad. He is to dine with me to-day and my Lord Chesterfield, and from the two extremes I hope to have some entertainment.

My Lord Carlisle is laying out a mint of money in making an extraordinary place to bury his own family in a fine manner than I have ever heard of and for a great number of them, which are yet to be born. At the same time none of his children are easy and Lady Mary can't be married for want of a good fortune, whose person is not ill and she has a great deal of life and wit, and nothing that I see wrong in her behaviour.

There is a woman here, my Lady Charlotte Byng, that always looks to be happier than her Majesty was the day of her coronation.

Some other instances I could give of men that have very good

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

sense that are married to women that are idiots, have neither beauty nor money, and others that are valuable women with fortunes married to brutes. This gives me (what they say is a wicked thought) that marriages are pre-destinated. But by some of these accounts which I send you, I think it is very plain that there is some tincture more or less of madness in almost everybody that one knows. As one instance, I read it in a letter to-day, that Miss Vane goes a visiting in her chair with her son in her lap and two nurses in chairs to attend her. I should not send you London news, but that you are in the country.

I forgot in the description of my life here to tell you that after I am in bed every night, I am awakened with the barkings and howlings of dogs and hounds which is kept all around me for the entertainment of fine gentlemen in this place.

My Lord Malpas entertained the company in the public drawing room (which I thank God I never see) with making them raffle for a great many strange French boxes and knives, none of which were worth half a crown a piece, and which were his own servant's, at the expense of a great many guineas, which none of them could like, but did not know how to refuse. It is amazing how anybody can do such mean things, as to make strangers give money to those that belong to them.

I hear the Duke of Kingston has a violent passion of play and that Mr. Johnson has gone out of England to attend him.

There was really no need for Sarah to prepare to bottle the waters herself for she could quite easily have purchased them already bottled. Enterprising tradesmen had, for some time past, been offering bottled spa waters for sale, including those from foreign resorts, even as far afield as Baden. Scarborough waters were advertised for sale 'well cemented down in the bottles' by John Fiddes at the Golden Wheatsheaf in Tavistock Street, London, and he had also opened a branch establishment in Scarborough.

My Lord Carlisle to whom Sarah referred was Charles, the third Earl, and it was perhaps from Lady Lechmere that Sarah had heard of the building, after the design by Hawksmoor, of the mausoleum at Castle Howard,<sup>1</sup> for that lady was his eldest daughter.

<sup>1</sup> For a description and sketch of the mausoleum see Gotch, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-1.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER .

Her first husband had been Lord Lechmere, the first and last holder of that title. He had died in 1727 and the following year his widow had taken as her second husband a Yorkshire squire, Thomas Robinson of Rokeby, who three years later received a baronetcy. He was perhaps something of a country yokel, which may account for Sarah's opinion of him. It was of the lady that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote that after having played away her reputation and her fortune she poisoned herself.

The four months' old child seated on the lap of his mother, Miss Vane, sister of the first Lord Darlington, one of the Queen's maids of honour and mistress of the Prince of Wales, was Fitz Frederick Vane. He had been so christened after his reputed father, and His Royal Highness had in fact acknowledged the parentage to Sir Robert Walpole. But, according to Horace Walpole, two other gentlemen, Lord Hervey and Lord Harrington, had likewise each claimed, also to Sir Robert, to have had the honour of having fathered the child.

In spite of whiling away the time with her parties in her own apartment, avoiding the public rooms — the Long Room was the pride and glory of Scarborough — and Lord Malpas with his iniquitous raffles, Sarah was all in a fidget to get away from the spa, which in any event she had determined would never see one visitor again. But to get away was not so easily done. The first stage of her journey must be to York. And York, as Sarah pointed out, had distractions which were likely to interfere with the comfort of her progress to the south. The time for the races was at hand and that meant — on this point most travellers were agreed — great difficulty in finding accommodation in the town.

Races had taken place at York well before the first official description of a meeting dated September 1709, in Weatherby's Calendar. By this time they were a recognized part of the fashionable life in the cathedral city and the August meeting, taking place during the season for the cure at Scarborough, included all sorts of gaieties, for which Lord Burlington intended his assembly room as a centre.

But if a large section of society of all classes had taken most

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kindly to racing, others regarded the sport as a nuisance or worse. And Sarah was among the latter.

In any case she was once more in low spirits, since the good effects of the waters had, it now seemed, been only temporary. Gout had attacked her again as gout will, and she reflected on her health and on medical matters in general in a state of depression that was not altogether unjustified.

Scarborough, Sunday

July 30th, 1732

I have just received your letter, dear Lady Russell, dated Cheam, Thursday July 27th, which is but three days in coming. This makes me wonder how it came about that all your other letters were at least five days.

I had a letter last post from the Duchess of Bedford that says her Lord was just as I left him.

I am a good deal dejected at this time having got the gout in my right hand, and I have not drunk the waters these three or four days. And being extremely weary of the place and believing the waters carefully packed up would have the same effect at any of my houses, I believe I should have left the place immediately, but that Mr. Hanbury is not at liberty till he returns from some visits to come home with me. I reckon he will be at Scarborough again by the 8th of August and in a few days after that, if I am not well enough before that time to try the waters again and find upon it that they do me good, I will leave this place immediately, which I reckon may possibly be about the 12th of August, which I think is most likely to happen. For as to any great benefit to me from these waters, I have now very little expectation, though I am reading a book by one Dr. Wittie written sixty-five years ago of the miracles that have been done by these waters; not only for the scurvy but even for the gout. But I expect no miracles for myself and will submit to my two crutches and live in my own house, as long or as little a time as God pleases. This author says a great deal of the benefit people would have in drinking nothing but good water for the generality of their drink. It is what nature first designed, and I really believe it is best for one's health, and there can be no doubt that it would be for the advantage of young people



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

to drink very little ale, beer or wine. He says that in the time of the Romans, no man ever tasted wine till he was 18 years old and women never any at all. And he seems to think that people's living so much longer formerly than they do now proceeded from their drinking water. I am convinced that the less wine or malt drink young people take, it is much the better. But for the people of my age that have been used to drink wine, one can only lessen it by mixing it with water. He gives a sad account of drinking any water out of a pond, which is a standing water, which makes one think that carp or any fish in standing waters must be unwholesome. But spring water is the best and especially where it is upon gravel.

I shall be sure to let you know, as soon as I am determined when I shall leave this place. I shall go first to Woburn and stay there longer if you are there, and from thence I shall go to St. Albans and continue there as long as it is agreeable to me, and afterwards perhaps to Blenheim for a little while, to see what is necessary to be done more to finish that place, for I would leave nothing there to be done by Mr. Morriss. Nor do I think it of any use to save money now, as I have formerly done for the trust estate, which I am sure no good use will ever be made of.

My humble services to my Lord John Russell. It is uneasy to me to write my name. Knowing my Lord John loved venison, I ordered a buck from Windsor to be at Stratton on the 26th and another on the 30th to celebrate your dear birthday.

In a week's time, however, she was feeling better, and had in consequence somewhat cheered up, although she liked Scarborough no better than she had ever done. Between the lines of her letters, whether she was complaining bitterly, as she might well do, of the attacks of gout when these were acute or pooh poohing them when they were slight or had temporarily disappeared, can be read the story of the fight she never failed to put up against illness with all its unhappy concomitants:

August 8th, 1732

I have this minute received your kind letter, my dear Lady Russell, dated the 5th August, Friday, which was but the 4th

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

and I am the more sorry for the accident which hindered me from writing to you last post, because I doubt it will make you apprehend that I am ill, but I assure you it was but a slight fit of the gout, which they say these waters always gives, and I am in no manner of danger. However, I don't intend to stay at this place longer than is necessary to be well enough to endure the coach. I have not taken the waters this fortnight, nor I don't intend to take any more of them; at least till I am quite well and in some of my own houses. And then I don't know but I may try them again, for they say they are very good after a fit has quite left one. And as I am sure, purging is good for the gout, perhaps I may try them when I am well, in a small quantity. Because it is most certain there is no other purging physic but does weaken one except these waters.

I was well enough to play at Quadrille yesterday and dined with company, but I believe I shall be sooner well if I don't hang down my legs and therefore I will keep my chamber to-day. This is enough to make you easy, as to me: but as to my having the satisfaction of recovering my limbs to any degree of strength, I find I must give up that pleasing hope.

As for asking advice, I have no great opinion of any physician, they only guess and one can tell one's self best, what one feels, and try such things as are safe and that have done others good in the same complaints. If one is so lucky as to hit upon a right remedy, it is well and if one can't one must submit as in all other cases to what there's no remedy for.

I am sorry you thought it necessary to ask my leave to lie at Holywell, for I think that place is chiefly good to me, as it may be some ease to you in making a quiet inn of it, whenever you have occasion to pass that way. And you know there's conveniency's enough for anybody that you care to bring with you, and Mr. Carr can furnish you with anything that you want. But if you come from London you may bring something that is just good for yourself to eat in your own coach. I think my bed is much the easiest and quietest in that place, for nobody is under or over you, but I doubt it is too small a bed for two, and therefore you had better make use of that room above stairs that looks into the garden, and where there's a little bed in the room before it that will serve Jane.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

I shall never take notice of anything you say that can bring inconvenience, though you did not caution me. I will take all the care I can of myself in order to meet you at Woburn, but it is impossible to say yet when I can bear a coach.

The letters from London to-day say the Duke of Bedford is extreme ill. But it is probable a man in his circumstances may be so often before he dies. I hope my Lord John Russell won't be prevailed upon to strengthen any of those securities which his Grace may have given for the payment of scandalous debts.

I should be very sorry for the death of the child that was lately in such danger, if I could believe it was the supposed father's. But as one child, which is very pretty, but such a plain stamp of another family, as makes me believe none of the children are his, I can only grieve to see a man I wish so well to, so cruelly imposed upon. And to make it the more plain, that lady was many years without having any children.

I saw the Duchess of Manchester this morning, who is very well. She goes into the sea and drinks the waters every day. She is as much pleased with my Lady Gertrude Hotham as I am.

I am most tenderly yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to my Lord John.

The construction of the sentences in the penultimate paragraph is loose. How Sarah meant them to read, is quite clear.

The Duchess of Manchester would not have lacked companions when she bathed in the sea. Lord Chesterfield, writing to Mrs. Howard, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, from Scarborough, this month, mentioned that many ladies of his acquaintance were so disporting themselves, to such an extent that a horrid rumour had arisen that the authorities, seeking to profit by so popular a practice, were about to impose a tax on the bathers, to be graduated for each individual according to the displacement of water caused.<sup>1</sup>

The Jane who was to be accommodated in the little bed-chamber at Holywell House was doubtless Mrs. Jane Pattison, one of those unobtrusive figures in the pattern of everyday life.

<sup>1</sup> *Suffolk Correspondence*, II, pp. 58 seqq.

## AT SCARBOROUGH SPA

She had been in the service of Diana's mother and she was now waiting-woman to Diana herself. There is some indirect evidence that, after the latter's death, Mrs. Pattison was taken into the grandmother's household. To her, Sarah bequeathed the striking watch which had once belonged to Anne, Countess of Sunderland.

Ten days after this letter was written Sarah, who had hoped to get away from Scarborough long since, was still there. But deliverance was at hand:

Friday

August 18th, 1732

I have received yours, dear Lady Russell, of the 13th from London, and I will be sure to order some venison to my Lady Falmouth, I wish she had said where she would have it brought, but as she has not, I think the most probable place to find her upon the wedding will be at London where I will send it.

I design to send to York for some horses that I shall want for my journey, but I can't be sure what day I shall be able to make use of them. However I desire you would direct the next letter you write after you receive this from me at the post house at Nottingham, and then enclose it in a cover directed for Mr. Hanbury member of Parliament, to be left at Mr. Spoar's, Post Master, at the Black Moor's Head in Nottingham, to be kept for him till called for.

Lady Falmouth was Sarah's niece by marriage, for she was Charlotte, daughter of Arabella Churchill by her marriage with Charles Godfrey, Master of the Jewel Office. The wedding was that of her daughter Mary to John Evelyn, eldest son of Sir John Evelyn of Wootton.

Following on this letter Sarah was at last able to make definite arrangements for her departure. On the Sunday, August 20th, she acquainted Diana with her plans:

I thank you, my dear Lady Russell, for yours of the 15th by which I find you liked your bed at St. Albans. I hope to be

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

there about the 30th of this month, intending to leave this place upon Wednesday. I have sent directions to Marlborough House where to send my letters if I have any before I come to St. Albans.

She was travelling after York by the London-Richmond road. This was easily reached by a cross road from York and then ran direct to St. Albans, where it joined the London-Holyhead road. It was the obvious route for the coach to take since Sarah was making for Holywell House, and was a much less roundabout way than she had followed on the outward journey, and should have taken less time. But she appears to have deliberately decided upon short stages, taking a full six days over the journey, for the thirtieth of August, the day on which she proposed to be at St. Albans, was the Tuesday following the Wednesday on which she meant to set out. It is possible she intended to do some sight-seeing once more; but if so she says nothing about it either in anticipation or retrospect. It is more likely that she dreaded the pain and exhaustion induced by long days in the coach. There is, however, no indication where halts were made for the nights. Even the inn which she calls the Black Moor's Head cannot be identified. The historic inn of Nottingham is the Black Boy, but another old inn in the city is the Saracen's Head. Sarah may well be referring to either of these.

She reached St. Albans on the day for which she had planned:

St. Albans, Wednesday  
August 30th, 1732

I received your letter, my dear Lady Russell, where I came last night and have met with no accident in the tedious disagreeable journey. I cannot yet fix upon what day I shall go to London, and am a little doubtful whether I will go there first or to Windsor Lodge, but I will let you know as soon as I am resolved and as I shan't stay long in either place it is no great matter where I go first.

I should have been myself, just as you describe yourself to have been, at the sight of the poor Duke of Bedford. Though

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there was no reason to expect that a man should ever act right that for so many years has done so very wrong and that it is really a loss to nobody but the sharpeners, it is impossible to see anybody, that might have been made so good a figure in such a condition as he is said to be and not to be touched with it.

I think the disposition he designs to make of his estate is extreme reasonable, but as one part of his design in going is to pay his debts soon, I must own that I think £12,000 a year is a vast deal more than he can spend abroad. For I remember when your Grandfather and I travelled with a vast equipage and family of servants, I am sure we did not spend £3000 a year in all manner of things. And there was very few of the great people in the towns where we were had near so much to spend. Nor could we possibly spend more without doing things that were ridiculous. For things abroad are so cheap and the manner of people's living so different from what it is at London, that there is no way of spending more money without playing or being extremely cheated; not being cheated at all would make one very miserable because that would give one a great deal more trouble than anything is worth.

I don't think myself better for the great trouble in going to Scarborough, though I am as well as I was in my health except lameness. As to that I am worse than I was when I went there, but perhaps that proceeds from having had so long a fit of the gout which has weakened my knees, etc.; time may make them a little better. I will write you very soon again and am most affectionately yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble services to my Lord John.

## L O N D O N

AFTER the return from Scarborough, Sarah made Holywell House her headquarters for the first weeks in September. Then she moved to Marlborough House.

The Duke and Duchess of Bedford were at Streatham. The old manor house on the Howland property — it stood immediately south of St. Leonard's Church — was now known as Bedford House. There the Duke, his brothers and his sisters had been brought up; and there he was now preparing for the voyage to Lisbon whereby some recovery in his health was hoped for. At the same time Lord and Lady John Russell were at Cheam, which could easily be reached from Streatham and *vice versa*, so that the cousins, the one, according to the Duchess, in a highly nervous condition induced by the illness of her husband and the other awaiting the birth of her child, could visit one another without too long a journey. And the indefatigable grandmother could, by staying a night at Marlborough House, visit both:

St. Albans, Sunday  
September 3rd, 1732

I thank you, my dear Lady Russell, for your letter of the end of September, which I received just now. I intend to be at London to-morrow night, and to go to Streatham to see the Duchess of Bedford on Tuesday. For she writes me word, she has tremblings upon her, which I apprehend a worse complaint than any she has yet made.

I can't fix the hour, nor I don't intend to trouble them at dinner time, nor to ask to see the Duke of Bedford, because I could not be uneasy to him. But if you will be there upon Tuesday, I can have the satisfaction of seeing you and it will not be above half as many miles to come there, as to come to London.

I am always,

Most affectionately yours,

S, MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to Lord John.

## LONDON

A fortnight later another short letter announced the grandmother's intention to pay a visit to Cheam, with a slightly dubious note referring to a certain person who might be staying there.

Marlborough House  
September 16th, 1732

I thank you, dear Lady Russell, for your kind letter and provisions which I am sorry you sent, though generally such things are mighty welcome. But the Duchess of Bedford and I set out as soon as I can and I hope at eleven o'clock to dine with you at Cheam.

The days are so short that I must leave you as soon as I have dined and I hope my being there will be no uneasiness to Mrs. Kingdon who will be none to me, that am always,

Most affectionately yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to Lord John.

Mrs. Kingdon, whose presence Sarah was prepared at all events to tolerate when she dined at Cheam, was that Mrs. Jane Kingdon who had been present in the Lodge at Windsor during those hours of the long June day when John, Duke of Marlborough, lay on his death-bed. It was she who had to carry the messages which Sarah, distraught with grief, and cruel in her grief, had sent to the daughters who stood without.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the recollection of that scene burned in Sarah's mind. But there is also evidence that she was jealous, bitterly jealous, of Diana's affection for Mrs. Kingdon. Of what happened at Cheam there is no account.

Towards the end of the month Sarah established herself at Marlborough House, where she remained for some little time. She was now very much better in health; an improvement that was perhaps due to the much abused Scarborough and its waters. She was able to write with her own hand several letters to Diana, who remained at Cheam; and she was able to get about, look over

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *op. cit.*, iv, pp. 648-9.



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houses, and anything else that took her fancy, to her heart's content; while the work at Wimbledon afforded her, as it was to continue to do, a perennial object of interest. Partly with a view to what she was doing in this house, she made an expedition to Southampton House in Bloomsbury, the London home of the Duke and Duchess of Bedford. The Duke had now quitted his house at Streatham, leaving his Duchess there, and had gone down to Portsmouth, to await the ship that was to carry him to Lisbon:

Marlborough House  
September 22nd, 1732

I thank you, dear Lady Russell, for your letter of Wednesday, and I hope you are well as to that little complaint you had when I saw you because you say nothing to the contrary. While anything of that kind is moderate, I suppose you know it is a very unsafe thing to stop it. If dulness of letters was a reason for not writing, I am sure, I should never put pen to paper, but I have no reason to complain of you for that, because you had been so good to write as often as I could possibly expect.

I am very sure that I shall not go out of town at soonest till the beginning of October. I have so very much to do about my building and other things, and Mr. Smith who is to help me, don't come to London till Wednesday.

I was yesterday at Southampton House, having occasion to give directions for some marble chimney pieces for Wimbledon. I had a mind to see one that the Duchess of Bedford said was a fine thing and cost £90 to put up in the large dining room. There is a good deal of carving upon it, which is not at all to my taste, and though it has not been there many years, old as the house is, that chimney piece is the dirtiest thing I saw in it, and I am determined to have no one thing carved in the finishing of my house at Wimbledon, my taste having always been to have things plain and clean from a piece of wainscott to a lady's face.

In this room at Southampton House, there is a set of blue and gold leather hangings which I bespoke and which is now as fresh as when it was put up. And I like it so extremely that I have bespoke the same to hang one of my rooms at Wimbledon.

Southampton House is the handsomest, the most agreeable

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and the best turned that ever I saw either in town or country. There is everything in it that can be wished. He that built it (my Lord Southampton) has a great character, and I think that house represented one part of it very well.

I am sure the Duchess of Bedford has given you an account of all she has heard from Portsmouth. If the Duke of Bedford escapes being sick at sea, I fancy he may get to Lisbon. But if he should not, I think I told you, that Dr. Mead was of opinion, that it would kill him.

In going to Southampton House, I saw a house where Mr. Willoughby lives and which is in his name, and is full of carved marble and gilt furniture. I fancy you don't know by a great deal what that man has done. But the Duchess of Bedford saw a bill of £500 for Southampton House, and except a little fieldbed there is not five pounds worth of furniture but what I put there.

I am going a little journey to-day to dine at Twickenham, and to-morrow I am to go another about business.

I can't say when I shall have liberty to come to Cheam, but I am sure I will come as soon and as often as I can. And in the meantime you have much better company than I can bring you.

You have but about a month now to be very careful to avoid any ill accident. And I think you should by no means come to London till you remove for the winter. I hope at my return to-night, I shall have the satisfaction of hearing you are well, who am always most affectionately yours and my Lord John's

S. MARLBOROUGH

If you send anybody to London to-morrow, I should be glad of two of those rabbits that Lord John says are so good.

Southampton House, occupying the north side of the space which had at first been called Southampton Square, but from the early years of the eighteenth century, had been more generally known as Bloomsbury Square, had been built for Thomas Wriothesley, fourth Earl of Southampton, during the last years of the Protectorate. After the Earl's death in 1667 his widow — she had been his third wife — had most probably taken the furniture, which was bequeathed to her, out of the house when she had quitted it on her own third marriage.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

The next to live in the mansion, and to furnish it afresh had been the Earl's daughter Rachel — to whom the Bloomsbury property had fallen as part of her share of her father's estate — and her second husband William Lord Russell. From Southampton House had gone forth Lord Russell to the imprisonment and trial which had ended with the execution in the Lincoln's Inn Fields, and to that house his lifeless body had been brought back. There, in her widowhood, Rachel had continued to live, at first with her boy and two girls. But the girls had married, and then the boy. When the latter took up his married life — he had then succeeded his grandfather as second Duke of Bedford — he and his wife had elected to live, when they were not at Woburn, at the house in Streatham, part of his wife's inheritance, rather than in the mansion at Bloomsbury. Much of the furniture in the latter house was then transferred to Streatham, as is shown by the household accounts, as well as by those of the carriers who conveyed the goods. Sufficient had been left for Rachel's use in the rooms which she had chosen for her own occupation, and one suite of rooms at least was refurnished by the Duke and Duchess for such times as they wanted to visit London. But the Duke, still a young man, had died at Streatham, of small-pox, and at Streatham his two young sons, Wriothesley, the third Duke and Lord John Russell, had remained with their mother, and had grown up there. In Southampton House, desolate and half empty, Rachel had lived on, more than ever alone, until her death in 1723.

When, therefore, two years later Wriothesley, the third duke, had married Lady Anne Egerton, the mansion in Bloomsbury, with its tragic memories, had long been only partly occupied and partly furnished. It would have needed doing up. If, as seems probable, the ornately carved mantelpiece, of which Sarah had something to say, is one of those mentioned in a later inventory, the description given therein justifies the inference that, with its fellows, it was put into the house about this date. A good deal of new furniture was also bought. Some of it, including the one set of hangings was, according to her own account, contributed by Sarah. But no description of this furniture is known to exist.

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There is only the bird's-eye view, given in Sarah's letter, of the blue and gold hangings and the mantelshelf encrusted with dirt.

The Mr. Willoughby into whose house — it was in Bloomsbury Square — Sarah had evidently made her way, had originally been taken into the household of the second Duke of Bedford as a page. It is not clear from the account books exactly what position he now held, but he was some sort of confidential official. There is this much justification for Sarah's remarks; Mr. Willoughby appears to have been extremely extravagant, and earlier at least, as a page, thoroughly spoiled, if the bills and notes referring to him in the accounts are anything by which to go.

In the meantime the Duke of Bedford had now gone aboard his ship, which was a man-of-war, named the *Torrington*. But he had not yet sailed:

Marlborough House  
September 23rd, 1732

You will have an account by this servant of the Duchess of Bedford's, my dear Lady Russell, of the letter which she has received from those with the Duke of Bedford. However, I can't help saying that I observe by both of them, that they think it is absolutely impossible for him to recover or to live any time. And he seems to think something of it himself and to be sorry that he embarked. For he asked if the wind would not serve to land him at Bourdeaux, a province in France, which the Captain answered it would not do. And the Captain seems to be very impatient at the crossness of the winds, which I am apt to think proceeds chiefly from his apprehensions that the Duke may die before he has compassed the voyage, which would be a vast loss to the captain who will make great advantages by it in merchandizing.

I will certainly not leave London till I have seen you here. And when I come to Cheam, I will say more concerning the occasion of your coming there. You may be sure I will do in that matter, as you would have me, and it is not easy to believe how much I would give to save you from any pain, if that were in my power.

I have now an account to give you that I believe will divert

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

you, since I suppose you have not heard it by your not mentioning it in your letter. Two or three days ago, Her sacred Majesty was in great danger of being ravished. She was walking from Kensington to London early in the morning and having a vast desire to appear more able in everything than other people, she walked so fast as to get before my Lord Chamberlain and the two princesses upon one of the causeways, quite out of sight. Whether this proceeded from their compliments to let her see how much stronger she was than they or from any other accident, I cannot say. But my Lord Grantham meeting a country clown asked him if he had met any person and how far they were off! To which he answered he had met a jolly crummy woman with whom he had been fighting some time to kiss her. I am surprised at the man's fancy! And my Lord Grantham was so frightened that he screamed out and said it was the Queen. Upon which the country fellow was out of his wits, fell upon his knees, cried and earnestly begged of my Lord Grantham to speak for him for he was sure he should be hanged for what he had done. But did not explain further what it was. And her Majesty does not own more than that he struggled with her, but that she got the better of him. And if he should have presumed to have got a good kiss, I think it is much better to conceal it than to do as Mrs. Murray did. Upon the whole I should be very glad that somebody would make a ballad of it. For when I was at Scarborough, I learned to sing and I fancy I could perform such a one very well without any graces.

At an entertainment lately where the Queen was, I think at Sir Robert Walpole's, there was dancing. It was chiefly designed, I believe, to introduce Sir Paul Metthwyn to the Queen, who left the Ministry some time ago when he thought it could not stand. Her Majesty flattered him to that degree that anybody but such a Don Quixote as he, would have been offended at. They danced country dances and concluded with the Hemp Dressers and came into the room, where the Queen was at play and danced round the table; upon which the Queen rose up, took Sir Paul by the hand, danced through all the rooms and so to the coach.

I am told there is something more than merriment in all this matter, and that Sir Paul is to assist in the Parliament to bring

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off Sir Robert Sutton, who the court has a mind to save. But it won't have a good air for them to begin it. He spoke for him last sessions, when others were ashamed to do it. And if he comes off when the Parliament meets, nobody else can be punished. Nor nobody but him has any effects to help the sufferers. But I am told that it will be next to impossible to save him. And I hope it is true. For of all those vile people that have acted to ruin so many, he is the most guilty. I am in great haste going into my coach and can say no more, and I believe you will think it enough for this time.

Sarah's picture of what befell Queen Caroline as she strode along the causeway raised for the convenience of foot passengers, above the road which led from Kensington through Knightsbridge to London, is as perfect a one as could have been given in the ballad which she would have liked to have seen written — and herself to have sung — or in a painting by the young Hogarth, just now on the threshold of his fame. The attack on Mrs. Murray, daughter of Lady Griselda Baillie, by one of her father's footmen, had, indeed, been seized on by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and commemorated in the *Epistle from Arthur Grey in Newgate*.

The more decorous but still lively incident in which the Queen was concerned, dancing one of the most popular of the country dances of the day — it was a romping affair, including all the dancers and usually terminated a ball — with the abandon in which the greater as well as the lesser members of the community could and did, on occasion, indulge, had doubtless taken place at the dinner given by Sir Robert Walpole a week or two previously. That dinner, reported the *Gentleman's Magazine*, was offered to Her Majesty, His Royal Highness the Prince, His Highness the Duke, and the three eldest Princesses, who were elegantly entertained by Sir Robert in the greenhouse of his mansion. For the occasion the walls of the greenhouse had been hung, stated the report, with the finest pictures in Europe. The entertainment presumably took place at the house which Sir Robert had built for his residence at Richmond; it was not until six years after this time that he accepted — as Chancellor of the Exchequer — the house

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

in Downing Street. The pictures or some of them may very well have been brought up from Houghton in honour of the royal guests.

Of the other guests concerning the reason for whose presence Sarah had her suspicions, Sir Paul Metthwyn, or Methuen, as the name was later more generally written, diplomatist and collector of pictures, had on his return from service abroad become Controller of the Household. But he had resigned that office in 1730; a year of bitter opposition to Walpole, which in the event left him supreme in the Government. Sir Robert Sutton's offence, for which he had been expelled the house in May of the current year, was fraudulent practice in the management of certain charitable corporations.<sup>1</sup>

Lord and Lady John Russell may already have occupied their town house in Grosvenor Street, for Sarah had sent her letters from Scarborough to that address. But it was only now being redecorated and put in order for their use. Thither from Marlborough House, Sarah proceeded on a visit of inspection:

Monday night, September 25th, 1732

I won't begin this letter in the common style of calling it a trouble to my dear Lady Russell, having written to you this morning. For since you always express so much kindness for me I think those words are ridiculous between friends. And I have a great mind to lose no time in letting you know I have been this morning to see your house, and I really think that it is a very good one.

Though several people have larger rooms, what you have is as much as is of any real use to anybody, and the white painting with so much red damask looks mighty handsome. All the hangings are up in the four rooms above stairs except some pieces that are to be where the glass don't cover all the wainscott, and I think that will look very well. But the glasses are not yet put up, which may easily be done. But what I apprehend most and which is the chief reason of my writing to you is, that the red won't be finished time enough to have the room thoroughly clean and to be rubbed dry before you come to town. And if

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Parliamentary History*, 1811, VIII, p. 1161.

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you come into a room that is but just washed, you will get a cold which will be very troublesome to you at this time. I don't doubt but that you'll take care not to lie upon a new feather bed and to have all the quilts well aired.

The room where your bed stands is certainly the best and only one, you could put it in that house. But it is much too broad and too long for the room. I am confident there is none quite so large in the great rooms upon the principal floor at Blenheim. I measured it and it is seven foot long and six broad, which makes the feet of the bed come too near the glass that is to be in the pier. And so little a room should not have had a bed in it either broader or longer than is necessary. For as it is, there is ample room for Duchess to lie between you and my Lord John. My red damask bed at Marlborough House is but 4:10 inches broad and if yours had been five foot broad and six feet and five or six inches long, it would have been as large as is useful and a vast deal handsomer for that room, and would have served in many of the rooms at Stratton when you furnish that house. The hangings being over the two doors makes it infinitely better than it would have been otherwise. And I fancy when you see it, you will think it a very agreeable bedchamber if it were not for the bed's being so very large. And if you should happen to think as I do, I believe it would be very easy to cut the bed to be of the bigness that is just necessary, which will make the room look a good deal handsomer and it will be only a little waste in the damask in the bases, cornice and vallance. For it will be no prejudice to have the curtains as full for a less bed as they designed for a large one. I think the bed is of a good height, for I hate those that come to the top of the ceiling. But I could not see whether the proportion of the vallance to the cornice was right because they were not up; but I know all upholsterers love to make the vallance too narrow for the depth of the cornice. As the bed don't come up to the ceiling, your upholsterer has gratified this passion and likewise the modern architects by making two things to stand upon the feet of the bed, which I call Gimmey-Gommenys. But as it is the mode to have such thing, they are not so ugly, but you may let them stand or take them away as you please.

The Prince has been to see the stables in the Mews, and as



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

soon as he saw the pillars he said, what the devil are these? The beauty of a stable is to see a great many horses, but in this you can only see two or three as you go up between the pillars. I was surprised at his Royal Highness saying what appeared to me so very rational! The Queen sat in the coach and did not go in, so I can't tell you what representation he made to his Mamma, but one that stood by in the stable told me, he looked very angry.

I hear my Lady Pembroke told the Duchess of Bedford to-day that all the cases for knives or anything of that nature at the toy shops are now made in the shape of a pillar of some order, which she thought wonderful pretty, for she, I mean Lady Pembroke, is not only very knowing in the stars, but she is a great architect herself.

I have now a piece of news to tell you that I believe you have not heard. That my Lord Bateman, notwithstanding his ribband and all his grandeur, thinks his house in Soho Square too big and my Lady Bateman is looking out for a small house of two or three rooms of a floor, which she is to pay the rent of and in lieu of that, my Lord Bateman has actually settled by deed the house in Soho Square upon her. This is the account that she gives of it herself, but I dare say if the whole truth could be known, that she has made use of some good reasons to my Lord Sunderland to take up money to buy this house of my Lord Bateman, which will be a great advantage to her, for she is to let it and to do what she pleases with it. This she likewise tells to convince people of the great generosity of his Lordship, who has been always mighty remarkable for such acts.

I shall expect the satisfaction of your dining here upon Sunday, but if you find your house won't be ready to receive you, you'll let me know it.

I have just now received yours, which you say you sent by Mr. Kilpin, which would have been of no consequence if you had not troubled yourself and sent it. I saw a letter to-day from the Duke of Bedford to the Duchess of three or four lines which might have come before, since she wrote him as soon as she could, but when those with him wrote to her, he did not take so much notice of her letter as to bid them thank her. And she had one likewise from Mr. Tough who says upon seeing the

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Duke change his linen, he was surprised to see him so much thinner than when he saw him stripped at Streatham.

I am always most affectionately yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to Lord John.

Exactly where the house in Grosvenor Street stood is doubtful. It is not impossible that it was the brick house standing on a plot which Sarah herself held on lease in the street — the house and plot which were left by her will in trust for John Spencer, younger. The plots in the neighbourhood and the houses built on them were now letting well. London was expanding fast; and the westward part was now favoured by persons of rank for residence, as it was also becoming their shopping centre. It was in 1725 that Sir Richard Grosvenor, so it was said, had assembled his tenants and employees to treat them to a splendid entertainment at which the streets newly laid out around Grosvenor Square had been given names, although Grosvenor Street may well have been so-called, in popular usage, at least a few years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Within the house to be occupied by Diana and her husband the use of red damask for hangings marks the growing fashion for the material which went so well with the mahogany presently to be extensively used for furniture;<sup>2</sup> and would here have shown up admirably against the white paint, and the glass which was to be put up, presumably, as was the fashion, to fill the piers between two windows, and also, perhaps, to be placed over some of the fireplaces.

One pier glass, at least, was to be in the room chosen for Lady John Russell's bedroom, the room to which Sarah devoted most of her attention. Her solicitude that her granddaughter should not occupy a damp room was not misplaced. The thorough scrubbing out of rooms, often referred to in the housekeeper's accounts as the 'great wash', which preceded the arrival of the family at one of their houses, and took place again when they left as well as before any important entertainment that was given,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charles T. Gatty, *Mary Davies and the Manor of Ebury*, I, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. S. B. Wace, *Introduction to Catalogue of London Exhibition of English Decorative Art at Lansdowne House*, February 1929.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

often left unpleasant legacies in the way of chills, since to dry the rooms thoroughly was not easily done. 'I'll not stay here', said Horace Walpole at a party given by the Duke of Bedford some twenty years after this time, 'this room has been washed to-day.' The remark was not due to any alarm on his own account. It was said in a half whisper just sufficiently loud to reach the ears of the Duke of Newcastle standing by, with the amiable intention of alarming that nobleman, who, Walpole hazarded a guess, would go home in a fright and dose himself<sup>1</sup>.

In the furnishing of a bedroom, the bed took, as it long had done, pride of place. Damask was beginning to replace, as it did here, and in Sarah's own bedroom at Marlborough House, velvet and embroideries for the bed furniture — the cornice, the valance, the base or lower valance which concealed the legs — although now there was a tendency to allow the latter to be seen again after a century or more of seclusion — and lastly, the curtains with which in the early part of the eighteenth century, the sleeper was still completely shut in.<sup>2</sup> Sarah found the bed too big. But it must be said that the third figure she thought it would accommodate was not that of a human being. Lady John's pet spaniel went by the name of Duchess. And some beds were much bigger than this one which Sarah took the trouble to measure — she may well have brought a measure with her. But the larger specimens may, it is quite likely, have been handed down from a period when these pieces of furniture did indeed merit the adjective of great. Eleven foot square was the measurement of some of the Tudor royal couches.<sup>3</sup> The increase in the height, however, was a later development. It was after the Restoration that beds grew taller and taller and, so built, were still at the beginning of the eighteenth century in favour, sometimes reaching to the ceiling, which Sarah was glad to note this one did not. For what was presumably ornamental carving, whether it was on the posts at the foot of the bed or on the cornice, she found a name.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ed. Toynbee, iv, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Macquoid and Ralph Edwards, *Dictionary of English Furniture*, 1, pp. 33 *seqq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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The royal stables, in process of reconstruction, occupied the north side of the space which was later to be named Trafalgar Square, a site upon which had earlier stood the mews in which had been kept the hawks and falcons used for the royal sport. Stables for the king had been built there, perhaps soon after 1537, when those in Bloomsbury had been destroyed by fire. Now they were being rebuilt — after the classical style; the pillars of the interior corresponding with the palladian front; a detail unappreciated by His Royal Highness with whom Sarah found herself in perfect agreement.

Knife boxes were now very popular. They had appeared at the end of the seventeenth century as open cases, but for the past four or five years had been made with lids.<sup>1</sup>

The house in Soho Square, the town house of Diana's sister and her husband, stood where later Bateman's Buildings were to stand. Lord Bateman had recently learned of the King's proposal to bestow upon him the red ribbon, otherwise the Order of the Bath.

On the day that this last letter was dictated the wind had at length allowed the captain of the *Torrington* to put to sea. But his passenger did not live to see the end of the voyage. The young man who had left England, emaciated, as Sarah had been told, in body, and apprehensive in mind, died, on October 23rd, while the ship was in harbour at Corunna. The body, embalmed with aromatic spices, the bills for which, with another little pile of bills for laundry done on board, eventually reached Woburn, was carried on to Lisbon to lie in the house which had been taken for him in the town, until it could be transhipped to England.

News of the death had not reached his family when, during the first week of November, Diana gave birth to a son. The child did not live. On November 6th its baptism by the name of John was entered in the register of the Church of St. Michael at Chenies, where was the private chapel of the Russells. Where the birth had taken place is uncertain. It may have been at Cheadle.

<sup>1</sup> Macquoid and Edwards, *op. cit.*, II, p., 274.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Baptism of the children of the Russell family was usually recorded in the register at Chenies, wherever the rite itself had been administered. On November 11th the little body was brought to Chenies for interment in the family vault. The name of the father was set down in the register as Lord John Russell.

That the latter was now John, fourth Duke of Bedford, must, if not already known to the family, have become so during the next few days. Just a week after the burial of the child Sarah wrote to her granddaughter and addressed her by her new title. But it could not have been a pleasant letter for Diana to receive:

November 18, 1732

I will come to you this afternoon, my dear Duchess of Bedford since you desire it of me. But I must at the same time own to you, that I think it would be more for your own satisfaction if you would live with me as I proposed; that is with all the outward appearance that is usual between such near relations who have been so long good friends and that would prevent any new discourses in the world, for whatever you do I shall always wish your happiness and think it of more consequence than my own, but I can't do impossibilities. Any person that ever loved another must needs be sensible that there can be no great joy in the conversation of those that come to one from one's greatest enemy's and such as have used me in so shameful a manner. Something of this kind I have intended to say to you ever since the monstrous treatment which I had from the rest of your family, which I do believe you were very sorry for, though I have often observed you were very partial to them, and I was unwilling to give you uneasiness in the condition you were in and therefore deferred it. But now I must tell you that you must choose one of two things: which is to live with me as I have proposed, or to distinguish yourself by shewing how far you are from having any of Lady Bateman's principles. I don't mean by this that you should not see your brothers, but she is a disgrace to be anybody's sister.

It has been the custom of all times to put a mark upon the contriver of any great mischief, and as to my two grandsons, they cannot help their weakness, nor is there any reason to

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apprehend any deep plot from them, they have only given a great wound to their characters. Since John Spencer likes it better to depend upon a vain extravagant brother than to have had a great estate from me, by only acting like a man of sense and true principles, he may please himself, for I shall concern myself no more about him. But for Lady Bateman I must declare that I never can have any satisfaction in the conversation of anybody that has any commerce with her, I mean as to my own relations, for as to common acquaintances, I don't concern myself with what they do.

I desire, my dear, that you will consider very well before you take your resolution, for, as I have already said, your happiness is what I most desire in everything that is in nature possible for me to comply with and whatever you do must be with the approbation of the Duke of Bedford, for without doing everything that is agreeable to him you cannot be happy. If you determine upon the way that the two ladies you sent told me you were inclined, (that is) not to take away those few comforts I have left, (then) you must be very plain with Lady Bateman — for there is no acting in a thing of this kind by halves or by trimming — in letting her know that you can have no commerce with her; that you are very sorry that she did not reflect upon the very ill consequences of what she has done; that all people that are either good or reasonable are and must be sensible that there is no precedent of such a treatment to a grandmother that for thirty years has been labouring to assist and serve the whole family, and has done it with great success; and that you cannot live with any quiet or ease if you do anything that is grievous to me.

I think I am not in my nature at all partial, and I am the more persuaded my notions are right in this, because I do know that those of the most cool temper can't help saying that nothing was ever so scandalous as all that Lady Bateman has done, but I do again protest to you that I wish to have you do as you judge best and right, and all I desire is that I may be as easy as I can make myself in such melancholy circumstances, and whatever you do, I shall always be most affectionately yours.

S. MARLBOROUGH

## A MISCELLANY

It does not need much imagination to see what lay behind the letter of November 18th. But Diana, torn in two as she must often have been between her sister and brothers, and her grandmother, knew how to give the right kind of soft answer to the latter. By January things were smooth between them again. Sarah dictated a letter on the first of that month, using by request her granddaughter's Christian name, for the first time in this correspondence. The letter concerned a purely domestic matter. But the story of the maidservant, 'a relation of Grace's', springs into life as Sarah tells her tale.

January 1st, 1733

My dear Di——, since you like that name, and I am sure none was ever so agreeable to me, nor ever will be, I will always make use of it. I have nothing to say, that is worth sending a messenger on purpose, but only that I have a mind to try to do a relation of Grace's good, which you have seen. If it is no way uneasy to you, as I believe it is not, to write a letter to my Lady Bab. Herbert to recommend her as a servant, I should be very glad. And if you will send the letter by this bearer to me, I will give it to the woman to carry. This woman did live with Mrs. Hanbury, when I was at Scarborough, and is certainly a very good creature. She has sense, which I have seen by letters to Grace, she is very handy, and upon any occasion can make things for a dessert, which is often very convenient, though Lady Bab. Herbert has a housekeeper. Sometimes one may be in a place, and not have all one's servants with one. The reason of her coming from Mrs. Hanbury's was, that her third son, who is very amorous, was fallen so passionately in love with this woman, who was extremely modest and honest, that Mrs. Hanbury apprehended he would marry her. And therefore she put her away. This Mrs. Hanbury wrote herself to me,

## A MISCELLANY

and that she would recommend her to anybody. I don't wonder that Mrs. Hanbury was frightened, for nobody would be pleased to marry their son to their woman. However, if you write to my Lady Bab. Herbert, I think it is best to say nothing of that, because it is not easy to make everybody understand it. And I think it is best only to write something to this purpose, as follows, to Lady Bab: that this person who brings this letter is very honest, and has very good relations, that she is very handy, that she makes a great many good things for a dessert and that (though you hear she wants only a servant to wait upon her in her chamber) it is sometimes useful when one has a housekeeper, to have a servant that knows more things than just how to dress one.

I wish you and the Duke of Bedford the compliment of the day, and am most tenderly yours.

S. MARLBOROUGH

Grace, to whom the girl was related, was without doubt Grace Ridley, the waiting woman whom Sarah remembered so magnificently in her will: an annuity of £300; £15,000 down; a locket with a portrait of the Duke; one of Sir Godfrey Kneller's pictures of Sarah; as well as the striking watch which had belonged to the Duke himself and half of the wearing apparel of the Duchess.

The next letter was one of those in which Sarah's phraseology became more than usually involved — almost to the point of incoherence:

Marlborough House  
January 3rd, 1733

I think my dear, I have not written to you since you answered mine of the 1st of January, which you did in a very good manner and I hope your recommendation will succeed. I should have thanked you likewise for a very kind and reasonable letter on the 29th of December, but I don't care to write often when I have nothing in the world to say that is the least entertaining.

Lately, I have heard a conversation that was in the drawing room, which I have a great mind to mention, though it is



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

impossible to express it, with the same agreeable voice and manner, as His Majesty spoke it, which I own diverted me a good deal. You know upon some occasions he does me the honour to mention me, and after the usual questions, he asked, if I had seen Mr. Spencer. To which the person replied, yes. Which, quoth his Majesty, of them made the submission? Those that were in the wrong, Sir, answered my friend. Ay! but replied his Majesty, I doubt *poor* Lady Bateman is left out, and upon that immediately went to my Lady Bateman, who stood ready to receive him with great respect and he honoured her a great while with his conversation, of which I can give no account. But this, with a great many other things that I know, makes me see plainly, that she is a great favourite at Court, and that must be from the hopes the ministers have of dividing a family, who, if they were wise would be strong enough to make any ministry afraid of disobliging them. But they certainly think, that by her means they shall get my Lord Sunderland. And I believe they will. And at the same time he will think himself a man of great honour and understanding.

One small instance I saw of this not long since. After he knew that the King had treated him like a footman, taking not so much notice of him, as other kings do of any common gentleman, when they come to wait upon them, he still continued to go to Court. But it is possible, that might proceed from his own inclination of having a mind to shew himself.

But what I am now going to mention must proceed from the power of my Lady Bateman, which was, that he went to celebrate the installation, after he had so often declared, he did not like my Lord Bateman should have the ribband, which was a contradiction to his not liking it, and paying a sort of compliment to the King, that had so often affronted him.

Now I am upon this subject, I must tell you some other things, which I know to be true. I believe you know, at least I am sure you do, that my Lady Bateman pretended to me and others that did not like that ribband, that she was against it too. But at the same time wrote letters to Mr. Pelham, the strongest that can be imagined, to obtain it. And at first the King was outrageous and said, if my Lord Bateman had it, William should not wear it. But at last the great thing was compassed by my

## A MISCELLANY

Lady Bateman. And when they thought themselves sure of it, I remember little Mr. Bateman told me a long story (which, I suppose, my Lord Bateman told him, that he might tell it to me, and as I remember he told you the same) of a message my Lord Hervey had brought him from the King to offer this ribband, adding some excuses, that he had it not before which was not the King's fault, which was all quite impossible to be true, and then he added my Lord Bateman's answer upon this message, which was quite noble, like a great man and a patriot of his country. But after that, I observed that he avoided going to the House of Commons, when there was anything material to be done, and upon one thing that all the Members had had a week's notice, I asked my Lady Bateman, why her Lord was not there? She answered that he knew nothing of it. At the same time I knew he was in town and never further than Totteridge.

About this time, I met him a foot one day at Wimbledon, when the wind blew so cold, that one could hardly endure one glass down. He had two little bits of flannel stuck into his perriwig that blew about from his face like leaves upon a bough. I asked him, what they were for? And he said he had a great cold and a swelled face. I found by this, that he would not attend the House. And those bits of flannel like bits of leather put before horses' eyes was to be the excuse. Before the next Parliament met, he had the red ribband, upon which he solemnly promised and gave his great honour, that he would always attend the House, and vote as he should be directed for the King's service. Upon which he went to the Bath, and stayed there a great while, to see how things would go. But unfortunately was mistaken and came back a little too soon, and was forced to stay at Totteridge some time longer than was natural to do, after so high an obligation and such large promises made by his Lordship. At this I know the Ministers were angry, and exposed him by telling the story. But I reckon all will be set right again if my Lady Bateman gets her brother Sunderland, which I believe there is great hopes of, by the King's and her Majesty's being so wonderful obliging to her.

At the same time my Lord Sunderland will know nothing of the matter. I think this the rather, because she has compassed

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

the marrying him to Mrs. Trevor, which is yet more extraordinary in my opinion.

The account of Lord Bateman and his red ribbon—he was installed ten days after the letter was sent—reads as if Sarah had dictated at top speed. She probably did.

After January a gap occurs in the letters until towards the end of June. In that month Anne, widow of Wriothesley, Duke of Bedford, took a second husband. She was married on the twenty-third at St. James's, Westminster, to William Villiers, third Earl of Jersey.

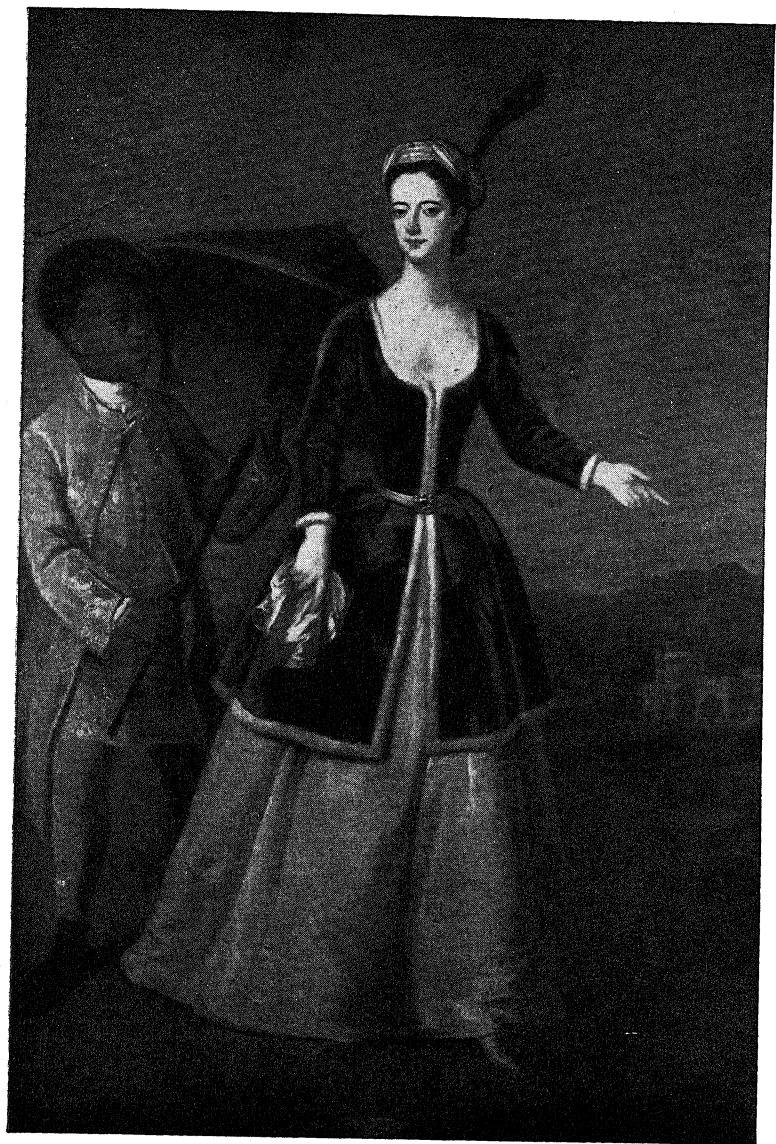
'My Lord Jersey and the Duchess of Bedford', wrote Sarah, 'were married yesterday, and went out of town to Weybridge, a house lent them by Mr. Mansell. She told me that the jewels are sent to Sir Francis Child's, and that the writings are signed and her uncle the Bishop of Hereford gave her in marriage. I was told my Lord Weymouth had a mind to buy them, and I wish he would. For there is not likely to be a better opportunity of disposing of them.'

There is no reason to suppose that the grandmother disapproved of the second marriage. She gave in fact signs that she approved of it. But there is evidence that it was followed by a prolonged wrangle with Lord Jersey concerning settlements and jewels.

In the meantime other family matters demanded Sarah's attention. John was now the only unmarried one of the Spencer brothers and sisters. And John, she felt, ought to find a wife. A possible bride had been thought of in the person of Louisa Carteret, the second daughter of John, Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville. As a prominent member of the anti-Walpole circle an alliance between his family and hers would have been acceptable to Sarah even had she not approved of his daughter which she did. But the young lady had married elsewhere. And for the moment the question of John's marriage remained in abeyance.

It was just at this time that the elder of Sarah's two surviving daughters, Henrietta, Lady Godolphin and *sua jure* the Duchess of Marlborough, was taken ill, how ill was not at first realized.

Diana was in Devonshire:



ANNE DUCHESS OF BEDFORD *and afterwards* COUNTESS OF JERSEY



## A MISCELLANY

June 29th, 1733

I have this moment received your letter, my dear Di, from Crowndale, of the 26th of June; every part of which was extremely welcome and agreeable to me; as your letters always are, particularly to find you are in such perfect health and so well pleased, which I don't wonder at, for the reception which you find in all places shews the great value they have for the Duke of Bedford. And I had rather be a private man beloved, a thousand times, than anything that is hated.

I cannot make an answer to the second paragraph of your letter that I am sure you will understand, but I am as certain as I can be of anything of that kind that the person that I said behaved so well, will be in no manner of danger any way the next campaign.

If you think my Lord Carteret's daughter an agreeable woman, as everybody says now she is, your brother John might easily have obtained her before they thought of my Lord Weymouth, and I believe considering his debts and charges upon his estate, your brother is not a much worse match in fortune; besides the great difference in the two men. But I never heard the least word in this lady's commendations till she was disposed of. Her father is certainly a mighty agreeable man, and has better parts than almost anybody. But they don't hinder him from loving money as much as anybody that ever I knew.

Whom your brother is destined for, I can't yet see. But if it were to an agreeable and valuable woman, I should never concern myself to have a great fortune with her. And at this time, though a younger brother, he has within some pounds three thousand pounds a year in hard money. And all but the thousand pounds a year, which is for joint lives, he can dispose of.

I hear no more of the Duchess of Marlborough. She is out of town. By the account I have heard the doctors did her hurt, but if she keeps quiet, it is likely she will do well, for her complaint proceeds from what is natural.

Crowndale still exists as a farm-house on the Tavistock estate. It was the house to which the last Abbot of Tavistock had retired after the dissolution of the monastery, and later was used by the

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

family when they came to Tavistock, on which estate there was no place suitable for their accommodation. Many years later the name was given to a road which had replaced an ancient lane called Figg's Lane, crossing a strip of land which lay to the north of the Bloomsbury estate.

A short letter on the fifth of the next month announced Sarah's intention to go for a time to Windsor. As Ranger of the Park, an office which she had held since 1702, she had for a residence the Lodge in the old park, known as the Ranger's or the Great Lodge, and later to be called Cumberland Lodge. It must have been a pleasant residence; but of the house as Sarah knew it — and, as was only to be expected, she did a good deal to it — little or nothing remains. The stables, or part of them, date, however, from the early part of the eighteenth century.

Sarah was at Windsor when Diana returned from the west. And once more came trouble. Sarah's affections were jealous affections, as all those around her knew but too well, and now her jealousy of Diana's love and attention flared up at an untoward incident:

Windsor Lodge  
August 2nd, 1733

I am now to thank you for three letters since I had the satisfaction of seeing you, and I should have done it sooner but that I was sensible that I could say nothing from this place that could divert you or be worth the trouble of reading.

You are extremely good and kind in your expressions to me, and particularly in saying that you should always receive me with joy, and I am very sure I shall always wish that you may have it, but alas after all the uncommon things that have befallen me, it is impossible for me to have any. But I am contented with my hard lot, and I have a great satisfaction in believing that you enjoy all the happiness that this world can give, and I really believe it will always continue and that is now the only thing that I desire in this world.

There was no need of my giving you any proof that I wished to see you after so long an absence. However, I went a great many miles in the dust to meet you, and had the mortification

## A MISCELLANY

of finding that you could go by my house to be longer with better company, for you certainly did not know that I was gone to meet you till you came to Mrs. Kingdon's. This I don't wonder at, because I know that though you are very reasonable and good, it is not possible for any person that has youth and life to take pleasure in the conversation of one that is extremely old, and stupid. But if I may speak the truth, which I can't help doing when I am pressed to do it by your letters, I must confess I can't think Mrs. Kingdon shewed much prudence (though her wit I always acknowledge) in carrying you by my door with horses that had been so long a journey to set her down, and which must go back again after they had brought you to the lodge to set up. I think that must proceed from her ridiculous pride, though there can be no doubt of anybody's loving you. When you had so very short a time to be with me, I can't but think it odd for her to engage you to come to drink tea with her before you went to Windsor, when she knew how short a time you were with me, and which you were so impatient for, that you desired me to dine early for that purpose. A great while after you had left me, I went out in my coach to take the air, and saw your coaches standing at her door, in a violent rain, though you were in so much haste to leave me.

I am sorry you have forced me to say all this, which I had rather have kept to myself for I know it signifies nothing to complain. As to my health it is much as it was and it can't be expected that I should ever be well, but though I can have no great pleasure in life, as long as I do live it is natural and reasonable to make one's self as easy as one can, and I am going to Tunbridge in hopes those waters may do me some good for that great difficulty I have sometimes in breathing. Pray give my humble service to the Duke of Bedford and believe me always very affectionately yours.

It is not easy to me to write by candlelight, but as you have been so much used to my hand I hope you will read it without much trouble.

Thus torturing herself she reproached Diana; and no reply from Diana is here to show how once more she managed to put matters right. But put them right she must have done, for three



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

weeks later, when Sarah sent another, it was couched in a very different vein.

This letter was written not from Windsor, but from Tunbridge Wells whither Sarah had removed, having determined for this year to try once more that spa which she had visited before. Not that she thought much of the arrangements here either, but at any rate they were better in her opinion than at Scarborough. That to go to the Wells meant too a very much shorter journey than the expedition to Scarborough was probably also a factor in her choice. Plenty of her acquaintances, and incidentally also the Duchess of Manchester, were to be found at the Wells during August. And at any rate Sarah did not find her sojourn there completely devoid of lively incidents:

Tunbridge Wells

August 24th, 1733

I have received yours, dear Di, of the 20th from Thorney, and since I find by it that my former letter has found you, I will thank you likewise for that of the 11th from Woburn, and send mine to Southampton House, where I suppose, somebody always knows where you are.

I am not yet determined when I shall leave this place, because, though the weather, I believe, is a little too cold for waters, I take them in bed and by putting them into a very hot cup, which takes off the great coldness of them, I hope they will do me some good, for hitherto they have agreed very well with me.

I had the same inclination, that the Duke of Bedford has, of not meddling in elections, until it is nearer, but I am assured Sir Robert is not idle in that matter. And I don't wonder at it. For a corrupt parliament is all he has to support his unjustifiable proceedings, and a good one is all we have to save us from slavery.

By a letter I had this post I am told, that the Onslows triumph in Surrey. What opposition has been made against it, I don't know; but everybody does, how the Speaker was voted. In Kent, where I am, they are very busy in opposing my Lord Dorset's son and Sir George Oxendon, but what the success will be, time will show. When I came here first, my Lady Bristol

## A MISCELLANY

bragged mightily how many votes she had got for the Duke of Dorset. I wish he had nothing to serve him better than her interest, for she is a mighty ridiculous woman, entirely wicked in all things. But though her actions are so bad, I can't think her what one calls a fool. She is worthless, but there is a mixture of cunning and sometimes a good deal of wit and sharpness in her answers.

Now I will tell you a thing that may perhaps make you laugh. She came to me and reproached me much for not coming to her at London, nor letting her come to me. I answered her civilly, but extremely coldly. But at last she prevailed with me to make a party to play at my house (for I never play abroad, nor go out but to take the air) and we agreed upon articles, how it should be, and one of the chief preliminaries of this peace was, that she should stake. For her method is that sometimes a mark goes for a guinea and sometimes for five, and it is extreme puzzling and troublesome to watch her. But at last she agreed to all the conditions I proposed and we played two or three days. But at last it was so uneasy to her to be kept in order, that when she sat down to play, she put her hand in her pocket and said she had lost her purse. There was no remedy for that: so we played as well as we could. She sent several messages about for this purse and acted the part pretty well. But I observed that she was not really angry, nor troubled at the disappointment of all her enquiries. And yet she said, there was eight or ten guineas in it and a double moidore. Notwithstanding, she was in a sweet temper all the night, which made me conclude this losing the purse was only a stratagem to save staking, in order to make her mark sometimes forgot. When the play was over, I told her, that I had often looked into my pockets for things and have not found them at first, having four little pockets in one great one. And I desired her to search again all her pockets, which are made the same as mine. She said she was sure, and had not it. Then I desired the Duchess of Manchester, and I might search all the pockets. And so we went to romps. But she struggled with us and got the better, for I would not carry the jest too far. . . .

The post is just going and I have time only to desire that you will present my humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Lady Bristol was the second wife of John Hervey who had been created Earl of Bristol, at the instance, by her own account, of Sarah herself: 'I never was concerned in making any peer but one and that was My Lord Hervey.'<sup>1</sup> The lady, who was a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Caroline, was at this time fifty-seven years of age and had borne her lord eleven daughters and six sons. Sarah was now seventy-three and crippled with gout. But the hampering effects of age and weakness of body impeded neither dame from joining, with the Duchess of Manchester, in the horseplay which not unseldom broke through the formal, highly polished veneer of society behaviour.

In this letter appears the first allusion to the elections which were to take up much of Sarah's thoughts and time during the next month. The opposition to Walpole was, it was hoped by those interested, gathering force; and in her own case Sarah, besides as ever desiring with passion to see that minister's downfall, wanted to obtain a seat for John Spencer. She alluded to the subject again in the next letter, which also announced her proposed arrival to stay with Diana at Woburn Abbey:

Saturday morning  
September 1733

I have received yours, my dear Angel, of the 13th and am glad you will accept of my coming to Woburn at my own time, and I will make Grace happy in bringing Nany with me for she can be no trouble. I shall bring only one woman servant with me besides Grace, who may lie anywhere, and one footman. My coach, if it stays, shall be at the inn.

You are very good and kind of thinking of everything to make me easy. To have my bed things well aired is absolutely necessary to keep me alive, but nothing is less so than a dressing room, for even at Blenheim and here, I never use but my room where I sleep, for as I can't walk, everything of that sort is troublesome. I want nothing but a room that is quiet from eleven at night till seven or eight in the morning. If there were one below stairs where a little field bed could stand, that would

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Peerage*, II, p. 323 n.

## A MISCELLANY

be better than the finest apartment above stairs, but if that can't be I must be carried up to bed which may be done in any sort of chair by two footmen. If I could be below, I would crawl about sometimes with the help of two sticks. If you saw what a place I lived in a month at Tunbridge, you would not think I am very hard to please in a lodging.

What you say of the extremes in elections is a melancholy truth, but considering the vast power that ministers have by disposing of places, honours and money I can't see how it is possible to keep them within just bounds, but, by the help of some that have not thoroughly the principles that one wishes, and some of them may assist those that wish what is for the true interest of England, without being able to effect their own designs.

I believe as you do that I might possibly succeed in setting up John for Surrey and there is nothing more certain than that the Speaker will always do as he is bid. The expense should not hinder me from that undertaking, but I can't think it is so proper to have him stand there or indeed anywhere as at Woodstock, where, if I can, I would settle so as to have that place always, as it ought to be, in the Marlborough family.

But I will set John up at St. Albans too, where I have a natural right to recommend, and when I see I can [nominate?] him in both places, I can just before the election at St. Albans recommend a proper man to that town, instead of him.

The Duchess of Manchester said she would go to St. Albans Monday morning and if she changes her mind I will let you know when I send your coach to Mrs. Cars.

Before I seal this, my humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

But before Sarah came to Woburn she had received news that the illness of her daughter Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, which had first declared itself in the early summer, had taken a turn for the worse. The Duchess lingered for some weeks, and then, on October 24th, she died. In that month Sarah was back at Windsor:

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Windsor Lodge, Saturday  
October, 1733

I give you many thanks for your letter.

You have judged very right in thinking that what has happened I should feel much more than I imagined formerly I could ever do. By which I am convinced that there is such a thing as natural affection, though I have heard many people laugh at that notion.

I don't know whether I told you of it, but I have made several attempts to be reconciled to that unfortunate woman, and upon the report of her being in great danger, I did it in a very moving manner before I came to Woburn. But nothing I said or did had the least good effect. However it is a satisfaction to me that I did all that was in my power. But what do I dream of satisfaction when there are not two things upon earth at so impossible a distance as satisfaction and me? But as to this last shock I do acknowledge it would have been much greater had she lived with me and loved me as she once did.

It is certain that her nature was tender and that she had many good things in her, with some oddness's. But her sister that remains had the appearance always of a better understanding, as far as conversation shews it. But as she has been an ill wife, a cruel daughter and mother, and a very harsh mistress she must have a very bad heart. But her sister had good nature and was the modestest young creature that ever I saw, till she was flattered and practised upon by the most vile people upon earth.

Your concern for my health is very obliging, which is the same that it has been for some years. I can't say I am quite living, nor am I dead, which perhaps is the best state that one can be in. But I can say with Job that my eyes are dim with sorrow, and my nerves are as shadows, and indeed I think my circumstances is more like his, than anybody's that I have heard of or read of.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford. I suppose the Duchess of Manchester has left you.

The relations of Sarah with the two daughters, the Duchess of Marlborough and the Duchess of Montagu, must always make distressing reading. Sarah's worst enemy was herself. But the

## A MISCELLANY

daughters can nowise be held free from blame; and Sarah's declaration that it was the younger, Mary, Duchess of Montagu, who was chiefly responsible for the miserable state of affairs is probably correct.<sup>1</sup> By the irony of fate this daughter was the only one of Sarah's children who survived her.

The death of Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough brought about, as it had long been clear it would do, a change in the holding of the family honours. The succession to the Dukedom of Marlborough passed to the elder of the Spencer grandsons, Charles, Earl of Sunderland. Since his marriage Sarah's relations with him had been uneasy indeed. Now she showed she could be as impetuous in seeking reconciliation — when she wished for reconciliation — as in starting a quarrel:

Windsor Lodge  
November 1st

My right hand is put up in flannel and I can't write to you my dear, without hurting it, though my pain is not much, and I have a great mind to thank you for your letter, which I have this day received, of the 31st October. Nothing can be more kind than it is, and no one can be more sensible of it than I am.

And I have a mind to tell you, that the Duke of Marlborough has been with me this morning, though I endeavoured in my letter to save him that trouble. It is not easy for me to describe without lessening it, the goodness of his behaviour in every respect. All that he said was so extremely good natured, and with good sense. And I do really believe, he is very sincere and that I have now a prospect for the future of enjoying a great deal of happiness from the three children of your most beloved mother. And it is no small addition to the satisfaction I propose in this reconcilment to think, that it will be a great pleasure to you.

Before he went away, he desired that his wife might come to me, just as I was going to speak to him of her: which, I told him, I was that moment going to do, and that I should be glad to see her, when I came to London. For I never had anything to say against her. And that, as everybody gives her a good character,

<sup>1</sup> 'No excuse can be offered for the Duchess of Montagu's conduct to her mother. Churchill, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 645.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

I hope she will always behave to him in the manner I wish.

This is a very surprising turn, and as you know by my former letter, that I have been reading of Job, you won't wonder, if I can't help saying, that what has passed formerly in this matter could not have happened from a man, that seems to have good sense, good nature and good temper, but that God for a punishment of some sin of mine, allowed me to be tormented, as he did Job, I need not say by whom.

As to my coming to Woburn, I wrote to you by Tuesday's post, I have not yet fixed my day for going to London, but believe it will be in a short time.

Surprising is not perhaps the word that others who knew Sarah would have used. But she can always give a perfect picture of herself as she saw herself, even to the reading of the book of Job and her reflections thereon.

VII

SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

FOR the time being Sarah continued more than kindly disposed, not only to the Duke of Marlborough, but, what was more, to his wife.

Windsor Lodge  
November 5th, 1733

I have received your kind letter, my dear Angel, of the first of November, and as nothing can be so pleasing to me as your letters I would have thanked you sooner for it, but that it could not go sooner to you than Tuesday's post.

The weather I think is much better than is usual at this time of year. I go out in a coach or a chaise almost every day, and I have several amusements and little things to do here that passes my time much better than I can do at London, and without the delay of disagreeable people, which cannot be avoided in that place. Yet I believe it will not be long before I must go, to have the work measured and to pay all I owe for the building at Wimbledon, and some other business concerning the trust estate which now is of little consequence to anybody but your two brothers.

I am very glad that your brother is so well pleased with his wife and I wish from my soul that he may ever be so. I never yet heard anybody speak of her, that did not give her an extreme good character, and though I must ever be of the opinion that it was not a natural match for him to have made, without being in love, which is some excuse for anything, yet if he continues to like her, as you say he now does, and that her behaviour and temper is agreeable to him, I think he will be happier than if he had married one that in appearance had been more proper for him. One often sees women after marriage behave so, as to make men very miserable or ridiculous, when relations have had all the reason in the world, to think it was a good and proper choice.



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

As to the Duke of Marlborough I think of him just as you do, and I wish him as well as I did before any disagreeable thing happened, and as he said all that I could possibly wish upon what is passed, I am not satisfied with myself in what I said in return. But I will take all occasions to shew the value which I have for him. At the same time I do really think that what he has done is yet better for himself than for me, though he had not so much good nature as I hope and believe he has, because without the least partiality or self interest, nothing did ever give so great a wound to his character in all respects, as that proceeding. As it appears to me that he thinks so himself by what he had done lately, I wonder how he can see it, and not be in the least displeased with the person that has been the sole contriver of so much disagreeable mischief to himself and his nearest relations and of that I never heard anything but what I mentioned in my last, which was in his being angry at that lady's pressing him to take Knight.

The new succession to the Dukedom inevitably involved Sarah in much business and she seldom took business by the smooth handle. Just now, too, she had a minor, but lively cause of annoyance, coming from quite another direction:

If I were ever so tired of going to London I could not go till this bustle of the great wedding is over, and as the gallery is made for the procession to go into the Chapel, I believe my garden wall would be in danger of being pulled down by the mob, but that an officer who I don't know, Colonel St Clair, has been so civil as to send me word that he will send a guard to defend me from any prejudice, and I have accepted it with a great many thanks, for if they pulled down my wall and came into the garden, they might do mischief to the house, or rob it.

You see by the prints how certain the war is, which I fear will soon lose all the advantages that your Grandfather gained with such wonderful success, for I can't think that the Emperor can support himself against France, Spain and Savoy. The Dutch are certainly poor and England are very justly disaffected [*sic*] Sir Robert has been making France strong some years and spent as much of the English money in time of

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

peace, as if the King of France could be depended upon as a friend. He will certainly put the Pretender upon us whenever he has an opportunity to do it, and how soon we shall be swallowed up, God knows, but I hope I shall be dead before that happens.

By the great fall of stocks it is a vast sum that I have already lost, and to be sure it will yet go much deeper, which will be a considerable loss to your brother John and to yourself and the Duke of Marlborough, for much the greatest part of the trust estate is subject to that loss, and yet more by the change of the government.

Sir Robert had not many friends besides those he pays, before this great fall came upon the stocks, which will be the ruin of vast numbers and consequently all that lose by what he has done, will be more violent against him. But if he were to be hanged for the destruction which he has brought upon a nation that might have been secure and happy, I can't see what good that will do us.

Some years ago it might have been of some use, but I cannot see any prospect of anything that can happen now but misery.

I am not sorry that you will not be at the ceremony, but I believe a great many of the nobility will be at it, though it will cost money, which they cannot reasonably spare, for most of the lords are poor, and those that have least money are most likely to make their compliments, which makes them more under the necessity of selling their votes.

This great fall in stocks which affects so many, must make this ridiculous expense in the state of this wedding, I should think very provoking, for by some contrivance or other, to be sure, the nation must pay for all and I am very certain that ————<sup>1</sup> sold out vast sums in the bank at 154 before the stocks fell, for they knew what was coming to the public before anybody else can know it, and do make great advantages every year, more or less upon private people, who must bear the burden of all that they do amiss.

As the wind was fair for the Prince of Orange yesterday, I suppose he will be here soon, but they say when he does arrive

<sup>1</sup> Left blank in MS.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

he is not to be admitted to see the Princess till they go in procession to be married, which seems to me very odd. I remember that I have been by at several visits of the Prince of Orange and Denmark to Queen Mary and Queen Anne before they were married, which was done in a very private way. I am sure if the ceremony were to march close by my garden wall at this lodge, I have so little curiosity for it, that I would not go out of my house to see it.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

Sir Robert Walpole had indeed now made clear his intention to keep England out of the war of the Polish succession and had in consequence refused support to the Emperor, leaving him to face the onslaught of France, Spain and Savoy alone. At the same time the position of England on the continent had been weakened by the first of the family compacts which brought France and Spain together and by the declaration of neutrality as between Holland and France. This, in the opinion of the opposition, an opinion in which Sarah heartily concurred, meant that France would obtain domination over Europe.

But over and above her gloomy view of the course that politics were taking Sarah had—she so often had—a personal grievance. An annoyance had arisen out of the approaching marriage of the Princess Royal to the Prince of Orange, one which, as she indicated, kept her at Windsor and away from Marlborough House.

The bridegroom, chiefly remarkable for his excessive ugliness—his most uncomely figure was the subject of comment everywhere—was on his way as Sarah wrote. The wedding was due to take place the following week, on Monday, the twelfth of the month, in the chapel which stood between St. James's Palace and Marlborough House, part of the group of palace buildings and courts which until 1809 covered the site of the present roadway. The building had been begun for the Infanta Maria and completed for Queen Henrietta Maria. It was then called the Queen's Chapel in St. James's. Since 1700 it had been used for Protestant services and became known in turn as the Friary Chapel, the French Chapel, the Dutch Chapel, the Lutheran Chapel and the

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

German Chapel.<sup>1</sup> Now, for the use of the wedding guests a boarded gallery that was said to be capable of holding four thousand people, and had a pent house roof, had been built to reach the chapel from the royal apartments. The erection could be clearly seen from some of the windows of Marlborough House, and may well have darkened them. Sarah was not pleased. However she planned to go up to London on the Tuesday, when the wedding, which was to take place on the Monday, would, she supposed, be over. In the meantime, though slightly cheered by a visit from John Spencer and by a temporary disappearance of the gout in her hand, she continued to discourse—critically—on the arrangements for the ceremony, or what she had heard of them:

Windsor Lodge, Tuesday  
Nov. 6th, 1733

I hate to give you the trouble of reading a letter in my own ridiculous hand, that at the same time will give you the satisfaction of seeing that my gout is gone, which was so little that flannel has made my hand easy and I am now as well as I can ever hope to be.

I wrote to you by your brother before I received yours this day of the 4th, and sent it by him to put into this night's post. I hope he will not forget to do it, but if he should I could not be angry with him. He was so good as to come to me yesterday morning, and he lay in your bed last night, I did not expect him nor press him to stay, for I would never have him do the least thing that is uneasy to him, but he designed staying one night when he came out of town, and you will easily believe that I was very well pleased with him.

He is certainly very honest and disinterested with many good qualities, and I can't see anything in him that does not appear to me extremely good-natured and calm, which makes it the greater amazement, how he could be blown up into such a passion as he was sometime ago. But ill-nature and artifices will bring about wonderful things in a very young man and by

<sup>1</sup>And, in 1901, Marlborough House Chapel. This account of the chapel is taken from the article by the late Sir Philip Sassoon, First Commissioner of Works, in *The Times*, Friday, October 28th, 1938, p. 15.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

several things that has happened since, I am convinced that he did presently see what was wrong, but did not know how till lately to proceed to recover the wrong steps which had been taken. But I am so entirely satisfied with him now, that I could not be easy till I had asked his pardon, which I did yesterday and I am apt to think that is what has not been done before by a grandmother that wanted nothing but the kindness of those she loved. And though I still think and ever shall, that never any such relation was so highly provoked, yet now he is so perfectly what I wish, it makes me reflect, that I had been too angry and for that I have asked him to forgive me with tears, and in short I can see no fault in him but what will mend.

He is of a generous nature and being very young has been a good deal imposed upon in money matters, and being in great circumstances and not loving money, he did not consider enough and thought it of no value; but if he is not yet sensible of that error I dare say he will in a little time and he will make a right use of it, and if he does he will have enough of it.

I have had a letter to-day from Mr. Smith my builder who will come to London upon Wednesday next, I mean Wednesday sennight. He measured my building at Wimbledon that I may pay all that I owe there, and I am resolved to be at Marlborough House upon Tuesday next. You know I seldom remove from any place I am in, so soon as I intend. Very many things happen that prevents me, but I hope when I have finished some things I have to do that I shall return to this place again, and stay at least as long as you continue at Woburn.

I have heard that the peers and peeresses are to be summoned to walk at this great ceremony. I am glad to know that two very considerable peers of my acquaintance will not be there, and they say that the peeresses are to walk in gowns as they did at the coronation. This must put them to a great expense, which is no matter since I think none but simple people and sad wretches will do it. The writing sent to the ladies that carry up the train is that the King requires them to attend the Princess Royal for that purpose and to come in a proper dress. It seems the precedent for this great pomp is that of King James the first when his daughter was married, who was as weak and poor a creature as ever you have seen and nonsense has followed

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

that precedent, as these great ladies carry up the Princess Royal's train when she goes to church. I want to know if they will carry it up when she comes back, and is the wife to the Prince of Orange, who all his countrymen sit down with.

I answer myself this question, that they will, or else they make the compliment and expense to no purpose but to offend.

I have had a letter from Lady Jersey, who is in town. She says her Lord was obliged to go to London upon account of the wedding, but she says nothing of herself, but that she has not miscarried and is in very good health.

I am ever most tenderly yours. My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

This letter is sadly written and blotted, but I cannot write it over again. You express so much satisfaction at the thoughts of my happiness in being reconciled to the Duke of Marlborough, that I cannot help assuring you, my dear Angel, that I think I love him much better than ever I did in my life, which is saying a great deal.

Had Sarah reflected — perhaps she did not know — that it was none other than Mr. Inigo Jones, whose work she usually admired, who had arranged many of the details for the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine — and had himself, dressed soberly in a suit of broadcloth trimmed with fur, walked in the procession<sup>1</sup> — she might have spoken more kindly of one of the most magnificent of royal weddings. But she had more to say of the first Stuart monarch of England and his age:

Windsor Lodge

Thursday

November 8th, 1733

My hand is again in flannel, but it is so very little painful that I could write, but I have a mind to spare it, because I foresee this will be a long letter.

I am in the first place to thank you my dear, for yours of the 6th which I received to-day with a goose pie which is a very great one, and I dare say it will be good, but whatever comes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. David Matthew, *The Jacobean Age*, 1938, pp. 99-100.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

from you is pleasing, because it shows you think of me. I have not tasted it yet and as I go to London on Tuesday, I have a mind to send Mrs. Theddy and Con Kingdon some of it. For though it is not civil to send a bit of a pie, yet I believe they will like anything that comes from you.

I have now a proposal to make to you, which I believe would be more entertaining in the evening than Pope Joan, this is, if you could make somebody pick out, what is most ridiculous in the reign of King James the first, and read to you. There is a great deal so tedious, that I pass it over, but his love letters to the Duke of Buckingham are incomparable. My looking into it was occasioned by being told, that the precedent of our pompous wedding was taken from King James the first's daughter, who came back to England, as I have heard, and was chiefly supported by a Lord Craven, for King Charles the Second was not very bountiful to her. In this history, King James the first don't love money, but to give it away. Notwithstanding which, he was a most detestable creature. The history says that he kicked somebody for telling him that he had not the papers that the King thought he had given him. And so upon such usage, he went away immediately: but before this person was got far from the palace, the King found these papers and saw that he had never given them to him. Upon which he sent for this gentleman back and when he came into the room, his Majesty fell down upon his knees and asked forgiveness.

I do really believe that we have some peers that will bear kicking and that deserve it: but I believe it will make you laugh if you read what his Sacred Majesty did and said. At the same time I do think that if one had done any wrong to the meanest servant one has, one should have a pleasure to make them amends for it some way or other.

There is one account in this book that is very extraordinary. Taking Sir Walter Raleigh out of a very long imprisonment (who was a very great man), sending him to the Indies to get gold, but before he could come there himself giving the King of Spain notice, that he might take measures to prevent the design there could be no effect from the great expense he had been at in ships and men. And when Sir Walter Raleigh came home, he beheaded him without any new trial, but upon the

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

old charge, though his employing him, and taking him out of prison one would have thought was acquitting him.

But of all the things I have heard or read in any history, I never saw anything that came up to the wickedness and cruelty of poisoning Sir Thomas Overbery. I doubt his Majesty was not quite clear of that crime. For there was something that happened afterwards in the courts of law that looked as if the King did not care to have things thoroughly examined, and I think the good bishops of those times, except one or two, came into the most infamous thing in nature to please the King's favourite in making a divorce. When I read the management in those times with Spain, I could not help thinking of our great design, with a great deal of expense to place Don Carlos where he is, which appears to me to have united a great power against the interests of England, which I fear will cost the nation very dear.

I see by one of the newspapers to-day, that 300 tickets are sent to the Lord Mayor to distribute, I suppose, to the sturdy beggars, which looks to me, as if it was true, what some people have said, that it is better to be feared than loved by some great people.

I don't hear anything of a summons, as I wrote you once word, to peers or peeresses to walk. So that I fancy that report was not true, but I am apt to think that if they did not summon, it might be because they thought there would not be many who would be at the expense and trouble of attending. You have another reason now for wishing me at London, that I may not write you such long histories.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

Once more Sarah's words may have tumbled over one another as she poured forth to her amanuensis her account of the history of King James and his reign.

When she alluded to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury she was striking near home. The great-grandmother of John, Duke of Bedford, she whose portrait in the gallery at Woburn Sarah had so much admired, was after all the daughter of the lady who had contrived the murder and who had been married to the



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Earl of Somerset the same year, 1613, in which the king's daughter had been married.

In the meantime the Prince of Orange had arrived in England. The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported his arrival off Gravesend on Wednesday the seventh, whence he proceeded to London for the coming ceremony on the Monday. Sarah at Windsor was for the moment more interested in another wedding:

Windsor Lodge  
November 11th

Since I wrote my letter, which is long enough already, in my hand, I have a mind to give you an account of a very fine ceremony performed this morning at the Windsor church, a marriage between my maid in the kitchen and one of the carters.

I did not see the ceremony, but by the description, I believe it would have pleased me very well. The man is more than 60, the woman 30, and I think those ages well enough together. He is said to be worth £800 and he settles £20 a year upon his lady who has nothing. The procession to church was very fine. His hair was powdered, a flourished cravat, a very good suit of clothes with brass buttons and in short, he was better dressed than ever I saw the Right Honourable Horatio Walpole, till after he was so able a minister as to do great services to his country. There were bride-maids and bride-men. The attendants of this marriage marched in couples, but as soon as the ceremony was performed, the bridegroom with a very white pair of gloves would lead his lady himself to the lodge, where they are to have a dinner in plenty and state, and these nuptials are to be in this house. He has lived with me thirty years, and when I was not here has drunk water to save money. And now he is grown so reasonable as to say he wants none, nor desires anything with his wife, that he likes her mightily, and says she will be good and take care of him when he is old. He has a little farm which he thinks to retire to, when the lease is out, but I fancy that both he and his lady will be easily persuaded to live with me.

I observe one thing in this account, which I fancy is better than the ceremony at St. James's, for I believe the Prince of

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

Orange was not allowed the honour of leading his Princess home.

Though I have not been a good courtier, Betty Arbor writes me word, that her Majesty has been so gracious as to send to enquire how I did and to say she was sorry for my loss. Which I really believe she is, and I fancy that the message from Colonel St Clair to secure any mischief from my house with guards, if I pleased, though in his own name (for it was too condescending to be otherwise) was done by order. And all these things are to make fine weather with as many people as they can in order to make people contribute, who have any substance to their own undoing.

The picture of the carter's wedding was one that, if not Hogarth, then Zoffany, thirty years later, would have delighted in painting.

The rumour that the Prince of Orange was not allowed to lead his bride home was probably a confusion with what Sarah had said in her previous letter, to the effect that the Prince was not to see the Princess before the ceremony. Or it is not impossible that Sarah had got her tenses wrong and used the past tense when in fact she was referring to an arrangement made for the wedding, due to take place on the next day, and of which she had heard. But whether or no the Prince was to be allowed to lead his bride home became for the time being a purely academic question. For the wedding did not take place as appointed.

On the Sunday, when Sarah was writing from Windsor, the Prince of Orange had gone to the Dutch Church in Austin Friars. During the service he had been taken ill, and withdrew, leaving, reported the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a gift of twenty-five guineas for the poor box. After all the great preparations, the wedding was perforce postponed. It was indefinitely postponed, for upon his recovery, the Prince went off on a prolonged tour of England, including visits to Oxford and to Bath. And all the time the gallery leading to the chapel remained in place for future use, to Sarah's fury. 'I wonder', she exclaimed indignantly, according to Lord Hervey, 'when my neighbour George will remove his orange chest.'

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Horace Walpole, telling the tale in his reminiscences for the amusement of the Misses Berry, and who had been old enough when the gallery was put up to remember it, added that it really was not unlike one of the cases in which oranges were conveyed to England.

But presently another wedding, one much more agreeable to Sarah, was in prospect. At the end of the year John Spencer, with his grandmother's entire approval, was about to throw his handkerchief at last. The lady chosen by him, or perhaps more strictly speaking, for him, was Georgina Carteret, the younger sister of Louisa, now Lady Weymouth, who had first been thought of in this connection:

December 25th, 1733

My dear Di, I thank you for your letter of yesterday.

And I am very glad I am to see you so soon as Friday, when I hope I shall have more spirits than I have at present; though I cannot help saying something in answer to your last. If you think it proper and have time before you leave Woburn, I mean, if that Lord you mentioned in your last should happen to come again, I desire you would make my compliments in the best manner; and I am sure, whatever you say for me, I shall make good. I think there remains nothing which can be done in this affair till a meeting of all parties has been obtained. I propose more satisfaction and advantages in marrying your brother to the daughter of such a man than a sheet of this paper can contain. I think your brother John has good nature, sense, frankness in his temper, (which I love) and in short, a great many desirable things in him; but still he wants a great deal to get through this world in the manner that I wish he should do. And as young men won't taste even the best advice without being delivered with good breeding and good sense, I know of nothing so desirable in the present case as the kindness and assistance of a father-in-law, who, I think must always make a considerable figure whatever way the world turns. And I think too that it is possible that this alliance may be an advantage even to your elder brother, who has been so miserably thrown away.

I am glad that Torrismond wishes they may like one another,

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

when they meet; for I think that looks as if he was under no sort of inclination or engagement. And though I must confess I am much more difficult to please than you are in a lady, yet I don't think Torrismond is extremely nice, provided that the person be not disagreeable, is healthy, has good sense and good humour. As to great beauties, I don't desire one; nor did I ever see one since your own dear mother.

I believe I shall get over this fit of the gout, though I have yet been able to be taken up but three times since I was ill.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford. I am not yet able to write my name.

For the first time in this correspondence Sarah calls her grandson by the pet name she had for him, taken from Dryden's play, *The Spanish Friar*, in which Torrismond, general of the forces of Aragon, wins a princess for a bride and is himself discovered, after the romantic manner, to be a king's son.

John Spencer's wedding took place on February 14th next. Since Diana was of course present there was no need for her grandmother to send her a letter describing the occasion. Another lady, also a good hand with the pen, Mrs. Pendarves, later to be better known as Mrs. Delaney, was among the guests. 'They were married', she wrote in a letter dated February 16th, 'between eight and nine o'clock at night. After they were married they played a pool of commerce, supped at ten, went to bed between twelve and one and to Windsor Lodge the next day. Everybody', she went on, 'at the wedding magnificent: their clothes now laid by for the royal wedding three weeks hence.'

John Spencer had got ahead of the royal couple. But the princess was now at last to be married to the gentleman whom some at Court endearingly referred to as a monster, exactly a month after the Spencer wedding. At seven in the evening of March 14th, the peers and peeresses who were to walk in the procession on which Sarah had exercised her sarcasm, assembled in St. James's Palace. Thence, as Lord Hervey, always to the fore on such an occasion, reported, they walked through the gallery, now magnificently illuminated, to the chapel, decked with gold

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

and silver and velvet. Among the 'guests was, of course, Mrs. Pendarves, in a dress of brocaded lute string — a white ground with, in her own words, great romping flowers in purple, green and red — admiring the other fine clothes, but so squeezed and hustled afterwards that she at least was thankful for the existence of the gallery, into which she made her way to get out of the worst of the crush.

Once that hated gallery was taken down Sarah may or may not have gone up to Marlborough House. But the two subsequent letters give no address. And it is not unlikely that she may have put in a visit to Holywell House. On April 18th parliament was dissolved, and in the forthcoming elections Sarah took a passionate interest. She was not alone in hoping that Sir Robert Walpole, his foreign policy more and more subject to criticism, might be overthrown, or if this could not be at least his position greatly weakened. But Sarah had also a close personal interest in the elections, for she intended that John Spencer should find a seat. On the nineteenth a letter went to Diana, now again in the west of England. Sarah, even in the midst of political turmoil, could never keep off the subject of building for long. But having begun with that, she passed on to such of the coming elections that touched her most nearly, including those in Bedfordshire:

April 19th, 1734

I have now two letters to thank you for, my dear Angel, one from Stratton, the other from Bath.

I am extreme glad that you are so well satisfied with your building at Stratton, which, you think will please my taste, and therefore I conclude 'tis strong useful and plain. I am now more averse to Portland Stone than ever, because I see scales come from it at Wimbledon: which was said to be well done and by Devall that does your stone work at Stratton. If my house were to build again, I would not have a bit of stone in it, for very good brick wears better. And if a misfortune by accident does happen, it is capable of being mended very easily, which stone is not, mixed with brick, without almost pulling down the house.

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

It is very agreeable to me that you continue to like Mrs. Spencer so well; but much more that Johnny is so very happy in her: for she has sense. I dare say 'twill last, and that he is of a humour to make an extreme good husband.

He and she were in the coach coming from Rookley to London in order to go to Hawnes; but I was forced to send an express to Johnny and stopped him. Upon which he went immediately to Woodstock. And I have sent likewise a sensible person to manage that matter by doing every thing that is proper, and opening a great cellar full of strong beer. And as soon as he has made his appearance, and settled everything to be safe, he is not to stay to be elected, but to appoint somebody to ride for him. And to go from Woodstock across the country to Hawnes, where he may be Monday night or Tuesday morning at latest. He is of no manner of use in the Bedfordshire election, the Duke of Bedford, my Lord Carteret and their agents managing the whole, and is only to ride about as a fine young man in the chair. I hope the Duke of Bedford won't take it ill, that I did not tell him to go to Hawnes upon Sunday, where he can be of no use, otherwise than as I have named to the prejudice of his election at Woodstock, which place I always thought most natural for him to stand for. And it would certainly be extremely disagreeable to be disappointed in that, which I might have been if I had not taken the measures which I have already told you.

And St. Albans is lost, where I had so natural a demand by putting a stranger to stand there, which will cost a very great sum of money, because people could excuse themselves better against the recommendation of a stranger than against my grandson, if he had made his appearance upon the place. And that is impossible to do because the Bedfordshire election is appointed on the same day that St. Albans was fixed for, Wednesday, and all I could do was to get St. Albans put off one day or two, if possible in hopes that the Bedfordshire election may be over on Wednesday, and then he may come to St. Albans to give countenance to my recommendation to that town.

I heartily wish that the Duke of Bedford may succeed in Bedfordshire, which I own I am very doubtful of. And if it be,

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

not to mention a great sum of money, which I believe it will cost, in my way of thinking, there are much greater inconveniences than that submitted to, in order to obtain it.

If two good men could not have been chosen for Bedfordshire, I should rather have had St. John Austin, or Leigh or any other Tory elected, without my joining with so bad a man as Alston. For that makes it but one and one, which is doing no good as to the public. And I have no notion of contributing to have an ill man chosen, without any benefit from it. And I am still of the opinion, that it is no honour, even to the Duke of Bedford, who is so great a man, to carry an election in his own county, by the assistance of a certain enemy to the public. I think if he could meddle at all it had been much better to have assisted any Tory with his interest; and if that had failed it would moreover have saved a great deal of trouble, and prevented many inconveniences. And to show you that I have reason to doubt the success, after all that has been done, I learned last night from my Lady Carteret that they have been forced to buy Sir Humphrey Monnoux and his interest for John, by the Duke of Marlborough's choosing him at Stockbridge, who picked the late Duke of Bedford's pocket and was a confederate in all the mischiefs that happened to him. And though I believe he will be a sure vote against the ministers from his being a Jacobite, yet I think it is mighty disagreeable to choose so scandalous a man when one might have put in one of reputation, and without adding to the numbers of what all people who love their country wish to do.

But all this is now without remedy though I trouble you with it, because I love always to say everything to you that I think. And therefore I will tell you another thing that seems to me strange, if it be true, that the Duke of Bedford's agents are soliciting warmly for my Lord Henry Paulet and Chute of Vine; who are as much at Sir Robert Walpole's command as any of his footmen. But as this is so contrary to the Duke of Bedford's protests, and all his actions, I hope it is a false report; or at least, that it is done by his agents, without his knowledge. For I have heard some of them are not in the true interest and I know that our premier minister, Mr. Norgate, is a courtier, not from principle, for I believe he has none; but before the Duchess

## SOME WEDDINGS AND AN ELECTION

of Marlborough died, he was used to influence that way. And as your father gave him a place in the custom houses, he will make an interest to serve Sir Robert Walpole in a country, where the Duke of Marlborough has desired him to give it to another person; though he is now at the head of your brother's finances.

I believe it was an alarm without ground, the design of a third body being set up with Mr. Onslow and Mr. Scawen in Surrey. However as the Duke of Bedford told it me, and that he had sent some steward to tell Mr. Scawen, what the Duke of Bedford had said; which, he said, he was much obliged to him for; but at that time none of the stewards had been with him or sent him any message.

Devall is the De Vel of Horace Walpole. His firm supplied many carved mantelpieces for Woburn Abbey, which still survive, as does much of their stonework elsewhere.

The proceedings in Bedfordshire were, as she shows, not altogether satisfactory to Sarah, who would probably have liked to have managed the whole affair herself, but found, as was after all only to be expected, that her grandson-in-law was not willing to step aside. In the end however all went fairly well. True, Sir Rowland Alston, whom Sarah much disliked, was elected as one of the county members. But the other seat went to John Spencer. And then after all he did not sit for Bedfordshire. He also carried his election at Woodstock and chose to represent that borough in parliament. He was succeeded in his place in Bedfordshire by Sir Roger Burgoyne.

The two members for St. Albans were Sir Thomas Aston and Mr. Thomas Ashby.

Of the other persons mentioned in the letter, Charles Leigh was the former member for Bedfordshire; Sir Humphrey Monnoux, who sat for Stockbridge in this parliament, had been the member for Tavistock; Lord Henry Paulet, a Lord of the Admiralty, had sat several times for Southampton; Mr. Chute of Vine was the grandson or great-grandson of that Chaloner Chute who had been Speaker between January and March 1659 and had bought



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the Vyne in Hampshire. In Surrey the Onslow family had long held political sway. Arthur Onslow, father of the first Earl of Onslow, had formerly sat for Guildford but was now one of the county members. He had been Speaker of the House since 1728 and was to continue so until 1761.

The elections ended with a victory at the polls for Sir Robert Walpole. Nevertheless, the opposition had more than held their own. Moreover, they were soon to find out they had a most promising recruit joined to their ranks. The young Cornet of Horse, Mr. William Pitt, had been returned for the family pocket borough of Old Sarum.

Thus far the elections. Sarah's letter ended with a reference to Lord and Lady Jersey. The gentleman had fallen into Sarah's black books, doubtless as the result of the running quarrel in which she had indulged with him over money affairs and his lady's jewellery ever since the betrothal. To him and Lady Jersey a son had been born the previous March. 'My Lady Jersey's son', continued Sarah:

is to be christened to-day, and I have the honour to be god-mother with the Prince and Duke of Bridgewater.

I am worse in my health than I was when you were here, and have been all night in pain with the gout; but I am a little easier now.

I saw a lady that was to wait upon her [*sic*] yesterday, not one that was at all intimate with her however; my Lord Jersey sat the whole visit upon the arm of my Lady Jersey's chair, and kissed her and hugged her all the time before the company; which I should not so much wonder at, if that would make her live longer, because I am sure he has a sincere passion for the jointure.

I hope I shall soon hear from you, that the waters agree with you who am for ever most tenderly yours

S. MARLBOROUGH

VIII

LONDON AND WINDSOR

DURING the summer and autumn of 1734, Sarah divided her time between Marlborough House and the Lodge at Windsor. The receding waves of the electoral storm had left behind them the inevitable flotsam and jetsam upon which she had her comments to make. There were signs that another family row was brewing. But, on the whole her attention for the time being was turned again to the house at Wimbledon, and to some other houses:

June 7th, 1734

I reckon this will find you at Woburn, my dear Duchess of Bedford, and I hope in perfect health.

I received your pretty cup for my breakfast sent by my Lord Chesterfield and I have made use of it ever since. I have met with a china dish which is counted such a curiosity that it would please as great a virtuoso as Sir Andrew Fountaine. And therefore I bought it to put into your cupboard of china at Southampton House.

All my pictures for Wimbledon are near finished, except your brother Marlborough's, the Duke of Bedford's, and yours. And as Mr. Whood came here some time ago to know whether I had any service for him, for he was going to Woburn, not to lose more time, I send you the length and breadth of the cloth which will fit the place where you and the Duke of Bedford are to be, believing that you will have more leisure to sit for your picture at Woburn, than you will ever have anywhere else. And I believe if Mr. Whood can do anything well he may this picture, because he is so well acquainted with the Duke of Bedford and you. But as I believe he sets a greater value upon his own work than others will do, I desire that you would make a bargain with him for what I am to give him for the picture when he has done it, that there may be no dissatisfaction on either side. And I desire the Duke of Bedford's picture may be drawn in the coronation robes; for I have seen at my Lady Gertrude

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Hotham's one of my Lord Chesterfield's drawn in those robes that I thought looked very handsome. And I have none in all my collection that are in that dress.

I desire that Mr. Whood will condescend to copy that picture that was done by Vandyke for that charming Countess of Bedford in the Gallery. The white satin clothes and the posture I would have just the same for you. And I remember particularly that I liked the neck extremely. And I am sure, if he copies that, it will be more like yours than any he will draw for you. As to the hair I leave that entirely to your own direction.

I am extremely pleased that you liked the tomb so well. Your brother Marlborough wrote to me much to the same purpose. But you say nothing, as he did, of the garden and court being so ill kept, though it has cost me a great deal every year. And I will take another method of doing it, which will make it better and with a great deal less charge. But it is best to have patience and say nothing of it till the election is over.

I cannot end without something of the politics. And I believe you will be very glad to know that I have been told by a person that you have a great value for, that this parliament will begin with a greater opposition than has been known there many years. Pray present my humble service to the Duke of Bedford, and do not forget to make my compliments to Mr. Hetherington for what he says so very obliging to me upon the tomb.

Mr. Mansell has carried his election by more than a hundred in Glamorganshire, but my Lady Bab Mansell, who brought me the news of it this day, says they have demanded a scrutiny, and they have done so many foul things that I fancy they will play him some new trick. And she told me she believed they would not return him.

I am determined to go to Windsor next week though this day is very bad weather.

Mr. Bussy Mansell, later Baron Mansell of Margam, was the great Glamorganshire landowner. He had previously sat for Cardiff but in the election of 1734 he stood for the county and came into conflict with the nephew of the Chancellor, Lord Talbot. His wife was Barbara, daughter of the second Earl of Jersey and widow of Sir William Blackett.

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The tomb of the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim, the work of Rysbrack, had been finished, according to the inscription, in the previous year.

The china dish cannot, of course, now be identified. Most of the china which is known to have been in that china cupboard at Southampton House appears to have suffered the usual fate of china. This piece may well have been, even then, a little show piece, for such were now being collected. Sir Andrew Fountaine, Vice-Chamberlain to Queen Caroline and Warden of the Mint, who, thought Sarah, would have approved this piece, was the well-known collector and connoisseur.

The time had now come for the walls of the house at Wimbledon, or some of them, to be hung with family portraits. Upon painting and painters Sarah had her own views as upon architecture and architects. Again she can put forth an acute judgment upon details; she can on occasion admire a painting by Vandyke as she had admired York Minster. How far she was temperamentally capable of appreciation of great art is another matter. But an epoch which had produced, and was to produce, some noble works of architecture — it was the weaknesses upon which Sarah seized — was singularly second-rate in painting. In portraiture Horace Walpole summed up the situation by remarking that 'Jervas succeeded Vandyke'.<sup>1</sup> The family picture galleries which in the past had been enriched by the latter and were presently to be so again by Gainsborough, were now being hung with the work of second- and third-rate painters. Yet the excellence of Vandyke was recognized when portraits were painted after his manner; the posture of his sitters and the style of their costume carefully reproduced, as Sarah desired that Isaac Whood should do for Diana, harking back to the picture of Anne, Countess of Bedford, which she had admired on her visit to Woburn the previous year. Whood had, as Sarah implies, already done a good deal of work for the gallery at Woburn Abbey, and was to do more. He was a tenant of the Duke of Bedford in Bloomsbury Square.

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 1827, IV, p. 126.

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Diana must have protested — on this occasion it would seem on the basis of the common sense which her grandmother could bring to bear on other matters — against the plan proposed for the portraits of herself and her husband:

June 13th, 1734

I have received yours, my dear Angel, of the 11th which is extremely kind, and I am sure you cannot doubt of my being more pleased with every expression of yours that is so, than with anything that can now happen to me in this world.

The measure of the picture which Mr. Whood is to draw is designed for the Duke of Bedford and you to be both in a cloth of the breadth I sent you. As to your objection of its looking so different for him to be in robes and you in Vandyke's manner as to look as if it was drawn in different ages, perhaps, there may be something in that, though it is certain that the coronation robes were in those days the same as now, and it is certainly the best habit for the Duke of Bedford to be in. And many women are now drawn in Vandyke manner, though Vandyke has been dead I suppose three hundred years [*sic*].

However I am not at all positive as to my first thought, and if you like better to be in coronation robes, I shall be very well satisfied with it. But I think most of the women in that dress that I have seen look very stiff, and I doubt it will be very difficult for Mr. Whood to draw the dress of the head well, unless he has a good one to copy it from. But whatever dress it is in, the neck may be copied by the Countess of Bedford's, and the hands and arms and the posture the same, for I cannot fancy that Mr. Whood will do so well of his own head as by copying such a Vandyke. And he need not know that I have no opinion of his fancy as to the posture, or giving it a good air in the dress. Most of our best painters now make the limbs tame, and they very seldom make a picture stand well. But I fancy whatever dress it is in, he should copy all I have mentioned, which I thought very agreeable, but if you like the coronation better he may copy that from some good point. For all Mr. Whood's pictures that I have seen are disagreeable in their postures and dresses. And if you think Vandyke's dress too old-fashioned for this age, he may imitate the Countess of Bedford's as to the

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white satin and alter the sleeve and waist and make the hair as you like to have it. But if he can get a print of the coronation dress for you, I do not know but that may be full as well or better. And therefore I beg of you, my dear, that you would do it, as you like best. And if you take a little pains in it, I am sure it will be well.

I have now a thing to ask either of the Duke of Bedford, or the Duke of Marlborough, which it happens to be most convenient to. Mr. Scawen came to me this day to tell me that a clergyman, Mr. John Edwards, Vicar of Banstead in Surrey, had a promise of a very good living which he wanted, having a wife and three children; but upon his refusing to vote for Mr. Onslow, my Lord Chancellor has made applications to give it to another. And to reward him for his honesty, Mr. Scawen, having one fallen in his gift of £150 a year has given it to this man, which he cannot enjoy unless he be qualified by being some nobleman's chaplain. He has sent to the office and finds the Duke of Bedford's and Marlborough's numbers are not full. If I had any in my power to give I am sure I would do it, for I think there are very few of that coat who deserve so well.

I am most entirely yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

This is the first warm day a great while and I wished myself at Windsor: but to supply the not being there, I have been to-day at Wimbledon, where I have a great deal of business still to do. And though I intended to go out of town this week, I cannot go till a man comes to London, who is to give me an account of the terrible abuses that have been committed upon your brother's woods in Bedfordshire.

The number of chaplains permitted to any nobleman was, like the colour of their gowns, dependent upon his rank.

Even before this, when her other granddaughter, not nearly so dearly loved as Diana, had been mistress of the house in Bloomsbury, Sarah had taken, as given her tastes, she was bound to do, a keen interest in that building. Now that Diana would reign there instead of in the house in Grosvenor Street that interest

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was redoubled. And, to that house, which she now calls by a new name, she went:

June 17th, 1734

I have now three letters from my dear Angel to thank you for, all very kind, and the first the most reasonable and agreeable that ever I saw in my life.

I have not heard from your brother Marlborough, though as I told you, my first letter was his own affair. And it is so very strange, his not taking notice of either of my letters, that I cannot help apprehending, that the lady who has formerly done so much mischief is contriving some new plot.

I am extremely obliged to the Duke of Bedford for what he says about the qualification. But as it may be inconvenient to him to dispose of the only one he has in his power, if your brother Marlborough is not at liberty to do it, I have a mind to try the Duke of Manchester or my Lord Jersey.

I have been this day at Bedford House, though I could not go out of my coach. You know I always liked it. But now it is so much mended by the new wing and the doing it with stucco that I am sure there is not so good a house anywhere in the world. There is more convenience than in any house that I ever saw; and the two courts that are placed on each side of the house for the stables and offices are better placed than ever I saw any in the town or in the country. And in short, everything is done, with good sense; which I am sure no architect now living is capable of doing.

I dare not fix a day for going to Windsor; but I really think it will be the end of this week. I have told my Lady Muskerry that I will carry her with me. And I have made a bargain with her this afternoon that she should not take it ill, if I never see her but once a day at dinner and she is to entertain herself as she pleases, as if it were her own house, for I really have very little time for business wherever I am. But I think it will be good for her health to have some country air in hot weather. And as I pity her, I would do anything of that sort to give her any little pleasure.

Sarah, seated in her coach — lameness worse than usual may have prevented her from getting out — which was presumably

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drawn up in the courtyard of the house in Bloomsbury, looked at the house as Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn, inveterate sightseers, had done seventy years before, and like those critics, she approved of what she saw — although, in her case, needless to say, with certain reservations and some suggestions for improvement:

June 21st, 1734

I have just now received yours my dear of the 19th June and am very glad I can send you word my things are packed up and to-morrow I go to Windsor Lodge.

You need never make excuses for long letters to me; for if they were as long as chancery bills, I should read them with a good deal of pleasure.

I will be sure to send Mr. Scawen word, that your brother grants the request of the qualification. And likewise the directions what he is to do concerning it.

I was very sincere in what I said of Bedford House, which is the name I think it should now go by. It is altogether the most noble and agreeable thing that ever I saw in my life but there is yet one thing that I think would amend it, and I should think cannot be a great expense. I did not name it in my last because Mr. Smith told me that it could not be altered because it would darken some windows. But upon reflection I think there must be some other reason for it, that I believe is not a good one. What I mean is the stairs in the first court, which, though they were Inigo Jones's doing, certainly are not handsome and look too much pinched in the middle. And I do think now the house is so extremely fine and large with the two wings it would be much handsomer if it was made with a flight of stairs like those at Marlborough House with large half paces; and a great deal of the stone would serve again, either on that side or the garden front. And I do not see how it could darken anything, unless the room under the hall; which as I remember was only designed for chairmen and footmen to wait in. Which use does not want a great deal of light. And I cannot think the stairs would go so far as to take it all away. But this is only my own thought and the Duke of Bedford will consider whether it is a good one or not. I am sorry I shall not have the pleasure of seeing him when he is in town.



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I believe all you say is true of your dear brother; he has a great many very good qualities. And what one would wish otherwise only hurt himself, which I am always sorry for, but nobody but yourself is just as one would bespeak them. And I can only wish that he may alter in things that are to his prejudice, but I fear nature is too strong for my wishes to have any effect. And that great as his fortune is, he will never be easy in money matters. For at a time that he saw his extravagance obliged him to retrench, and did put away some very useless horses, he has made a much greater expense in building a ship. Where there must be a captain and seamen. And this I cannot help thinking a very odd thing, when he owed so much money and cannot live in a decent way, without borrowing more. And except what he has of me, he must pay extravagant interest for it. But I have learned to be contented with everything I can in no way prevent and shall always wish he might be happy in every thing.

I have had a letter from him in answer to what I wrote concerning the nasty mourning. And in that he agrees entirely with my thoughts. My letter which he answers upon that subject began with making an excuse for the very long letter I had written upon his business before. And which was absolutely necessary for him to have made answer to. Notwithstanding he does not take the least notice of it. And yet that letter cost me three or four hours to collect things proper to acquaint him with his own affair, that he might judge himself what was best to be done as to putting the landed estate into better government, for Norgate is the greatest rogue upon earth. I made everything plain to him that was necessary upon those heads, and desired to know his inclination on many points that were necessary towards reducing the intolerable abuses upon the land estate.

I am for ever yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Pray thank your brother for giving the gratification.

Sarah implies that it was by her wish Southampton House became known as Bedford House. It may have been so. The change of name certainly occurred as far as general use was con-

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cerned about this time, although in some of the accounts the older name continued to be used for a stretch of years. But nomenclature whether of houses, streets or squares was still extremely loose, and all or any of them might be and were, known simultaneously under two alternative names.

In assigning the building to Inigo Jones, Sarah may have merely been repeating a current tradition, the sort of tradition which had gathered and was to gather round the name of the architect; or she may actually have had some information which involved the name of Inigo Jones from someone nearly concerned, a member perhaps of the Wriothesley or Russell family. That architect could not have been directly concerned with the erection of the house, for it is known the building was commenced only in 1657, five years subsequent to his death. But the erection of the house and the laying out of the land around represented the belated carrying out of a much earlier scheme. The original licence for building on a specified site, the site on which the house did afterwards stand, goes back to the year 1639. Events both public and personal enforced upon the Earl of Southampton a delay of seventeen years in completing his project; but it is not impossible that in the first instance Inigo Jones may have been consulted; may even have drawn up a plan.<sup>1</sup>

Whoever drew it up, the plan, as carried out, had been for a central block with wings on either side; it is almost certain that the house so stood from the beginning. When Sarah speaks of a new wing it is likely that she is referring rather to alterations in one of the existing wings. Such alterations are known to have been made at various times.

The single flight of steps, which led up to the entrance on the first floor — the ground floor was given over to business offices, kitchen premises and, as Sarah says, a waiting hall for visitors' servants — does appear, as shown in pictures, quite definitely 'pinched in the middle'.

The brother to whom the last part of the letter refers can be identified as the Duke of Marlborough. That nobleman had now

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Scott Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury*, 1940, p. 29 sqq.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

taken, to his grandmother's extreme annoyance, to either not answering her letters at all or to sending very short replies to what must have been her long screeds. She was still on tolerably good terms with him and his wife, but spurts of annoyance with them both were observable.

To the Lodge at Windsor now went Sarah; and took with her Lady Muskerry, for whose guidance as a visitor certain rules had been laid down. Lady Muskerry was the wife of Robert Maccarty, Viscount Muskerry, a connection of Diana's through his mother, a Spencer. He was the son of the fourth Earl of Clancarty, who had been attainted, in 1691, for adherence to King James, and was now living abroad.

No sooner had she reached Windsor than Sarah sent off a letter, in which she reiterated and expanded all she had said previously concerning the steps in the courtyard of Bedford House:

Windsor Lodge  
Saturday night

I am come to this place, which is extremely pretty in my opinion. And if it was not for the convenience of seeing one's friends so easily at Wimbledon, I should repent me of having built that house. I wrote to you by the post from London, and directed it to Woburn, though you did not say directly what day you would leave it for Kimbolton. I have not seen Johnny yet, but hope he will dine with me to-morrow.

In my last letter I said a great deal about the stairs at Bedford House; if the Duke of Bedford should think it right to make them better than they are I did not mean they should be of marble, as at Marlborough House, for those are slippery and inconvenient sometimes, but I meant only to have them of that shape; which I think is noble and handsome; but I think they should be of the same stone they are now to agree with the house. And I dare say most of the same stone will serve again and perhaps be stronger than what is generally got now. Knowing that the Duke of Bedford will be in town on Monday, I send this letter open, that he may read it if he pleases.

I was really very sorry for the death of Mr. Hanbury; for he was a very useful friend to me and mighty easy to live with. I

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do not know how he has left his estate. I fear his children will be left too much in the power of one that you have no opinion of.

I am, my dear Angel, as much as you can wish me,

Yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Regret for having built the house at Wimbledon was, for the moment, a passing phase. Throughout the summer Sarah devoted much time and thought to it. Houses belonging to her grandsons, as well as Bedford House, also come in for a share of her attention.

Windsor Lodge

June 24th, 1734

I was yesterday at your brother Marlborough's lodge, which is extremely pretty and as convenient a house to live in as ever I saw. And I think it is as well furnished as any place need to be of that sort, and without any expense. For I see nothing new; and your brother has only bought one suit of crimson damask and some old field beds and upon the whole it is all done as I would have liked it for myself, excepting some pictures of horses and dogs and some old sort of Dutch pictures as I took them to be, with vast heavy carved frames almost as large as the cornice on the outside of a house all gilt. I daresay they cost a great deal of money; and are worth a great deal more to those that like such things than the pictures that are in them, most of which I believe are very indifferent paintings. But since such things are bought it is as well to put them up in the new dining room as they are intended, as not, though the projection of the frames come out too much, and will lessen the room. And if he happened to have any house that wanted pictures over doors, such great frames would be better if they fitted the place, because they would not look so large if they were put up high and would be more out of the way. But upon the whole it is all very well. Perhaps, you may think it odd to write so much upon such sort of things; but you have desired me to write to you, and I must say what the place furnishes me with.

One thing I am sure you will like here, that your dear brother Johnny and Mrs. Spencer appear to be very happy. And I never in my life saw anybody better behaved than she is. And

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in a mighty easy and agreeable way. She has certainly very good sense, which is the thing in the world most to be wished for in anybody. And one thing I will tell you, which you will hardly believe, but it is really true, that she looks much better without any powder. If you remember a great many of the old pictures are dressed in golden locks. I told her, I liked her better than ever I had done and she answered Mr. Spencer was of the same mind, and liked it better than when she had powder.

She is bigger than she was but not quick. I hope no accident will happen to her, for I do not hear yet that the Duchess of Marlborough is with child. Your brother looks very well and appears to me perfectly good and reasonable in everything, amuses himself with his pheasants, fishing of ponds and riding about the park, and is as busy as a farmer, and not much unlike them in his dress. He goes to London on Thursday to sign a lease of a house he has taken of Sr. Rodolphous Crichton in Hanover Square. He gives £300 a year for it ready furnished. And he says the furniture is very tolerable.

I am glad you are with the Duchess of Manchester because I am sure it will please you both. And nobody living can wish you more happiness than I do. Pray remember me very kindly to her, and present my humble service to the Dukes of Bedford and Manchester.

I am ever yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

The Duke of Marlborough's lodge in Windsor Park; its orangery and its extensive gardens were depicted four years later by J. Rocque, in a map with inset views, dedicated to the duke.<sup>1</sup> The site was the south-eastern corner of the Home Park. To-day a depression resembling a sand pit is all that marks the spot where the house stood. Around, where once were the gardens, stretch fields — inside the park wall from Albert Bridge to the Nelson Gate. Only a small bushy island, standing amid a loop of water overgrown with bulrushes, calls up the picture of what once may have been an ornamental park.

<sup>1</sup>*Plan du chateau et Parc de Windsor dans la Comté de Berk. à 20 milles de Londres, Renferment une des maisons et jardins du Duc de Marlborough. Très exatement [sic] levé et gravé par J. Rocque 1738.*

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The Dutch pictures which in this summer of 1734 had been brought to the house, perhaps bought for it, may have been poor specimens as Sarah implies, but equally they may have been the work of an artist or artists of the great Dutch school of painting. Later books and family accounts show these being acquired by the English gentry who in many cases, from the point of view of those who came after them, bought better than they knew. With their heavy carving the frames of these pictures may well have been intended precisely for the elevated position in which Sarah thought they should be placed — the position, over a mantelshelf or a door which had been the only possible place for a picture in a room in which hangings were used.

Hanover Square had been laid out between 1716 and 1720 and was now almost vying in popularity with Grosvenor Square. Sir Rodolphus Crichton or Crichton was the baronet of that name of Tetchbrook in Warwickshire. The arrangement with him gave Mr. and Mrs. John Spencer a town house. As their principal residence they had the mansion at Althorp, for, by the family settlement, John had succeeded to the Spencer estates. It is not quite clear where they were staying at this time. The next letter implies that wherever it was it was sufficiently near for Sarah to reach them easily from her Windsor Lodge:

June 26th, 1734

. Since I wrote to you, my dear Angel, I have received yours of the 23rd for which I give you many thanks.

As for what you say of the steps in your court, I do assure you, I had rather have them as you and the Duke of Bedford like them, than to any other body's taste in the world. What I said was not only my own thought but the thought of others; but I cannot say they were knowing people or connoisseurs. But what ever way you may make those steps I am sure the whole will be handsomer than any thing that I ever saw. And if the Duke and you should ever happen to change your mind, it is mighty easy to alter those steps as you like. In the meantime, most of the things Inigo Jones did is an authority that will bear you out against anybody's opinion.

I saw my Lady Weymouth yesterday at your brother John's.

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When she came to me upon the wedding day, I was so ill and had such a crowd of people, that I really could not take much notice of her. It was by candlelight and I had such a load of compliments to receive and make, that I did not know what I did. But I was with her a great while and had a thorough view of her. And I think, she has not only, what you said, a very fine person, but her face is very agreeable. She has a sensible look, good eyes, good teeth, and her hair is to my thinking of a very good colour, and wants no powder. She sings as well as I could ever desire anybody to sing to please me. And without any affectation and easy when one desires. And so much so, that sometimes, when she does not know the words without being prompted. In short if I had a son of my own, I should have bespoke just such a woman for him. And I could not help thinking all the time I was there, what a delightful thing it would have been if she had been married to your brother Marlborough. She looks like a woman of quality and by what I saw, I am persuaded, she knows what is to be done and said upon every occasion. What a delightful thing it would have been, if two brothers, that have such a friendship for one another, had married two sisters that love one another so well as they certainly do? I do not say this because I have changed my mind as to Mrs. Spencer for I like her every day better and better. I only wish they had both been related to me: but what is passed cannot be recalled. And I am very glad that I have one of the sisters. I am persuaded your brother and she are both very happy and hope they will ever be so.

I thank you for your kind invitation to Woburn, but in the very uneasy condition I am in, I cannot say I shall be able to see you there, unless it be from St. Albans to dine.

I am going to dine with your dear brother at his lodge, who am for ever yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Make my compliments to the two Dukes, and the dear Duchess of Manchester.

There was always that lurking resentment at the Duke of Marlborough's marriage, a resentment which could and did, at

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

any time when Sarah had, as she thought, reason for annoyance, quicken into anger. Stories are told of her quarrel, or quarrels, with the Duke and Duchess, when they were in their lodge and she in hers at Windsor. But on the whole Sarah was enjoying her summer. She probably enjoyed it the more because she had made up her mind not to go away for a cure as usual, but to try the effects of the waters of a spa nearer home.

Saturday  
June 29th, 1734

I have received yours, my dear, of the 27th from Kimbolton, and am glad you like that place so well. I heartily wish that everything that belongs to the mistress of it were as agreeable as you have described that to be.

My Lord and Lady Carteret were here yesterday and are gone to Hawnes this morning. Lady Weymouth dines with me to-morrow. She is extremely agreeable and I discover new charms every day in Mrs. Spencer.

I have begun to drink Sunninghill waters, which I hope will do me some good. They are of the same sort with Tonbridge. And as I take them sometimes at home and sometimes go in my coach to the well, which is exercise and good air, if they do me any good it is vastly better than to go to any of the water places, where there are no tolerable houses to live in. And many years ago people lived further from Tonbridge Wells than drunk the waters than this lodge is from Sunninghill.

I hear there has lately been a great quarrel at court between the Prince, the King and the Queen. Nobody knows certainly what it was about; but some say that it was upon his desiring them he might be married to some German Princess. I suppose it was so. His reason was to get some settlement, which will not be easily obtained, besides that her majesty will never like to have any court but her own. I have nothing more to add at this time, but that I am most affectionately yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

The springs at Sunninghill, about six miles from Windsor, had



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at this time a considerable reputation. They were chalybeate springs, two of them, in the garden of an inn called Sunning Wells, which inn provided a modest public room for the visitors.

The stormy interview which was known to have taken place between the king and his son towards the end of the month had given rise to plenty of talk. The Prince had long been known to be angry that his sister should have been married before him, with a portion from parliament and an establishment from her father. Now he, it was said, at the interview with the King, which he had demanded, had asked for a suitable marriage to be arranged for him also; for an augmentation of his income, and for command of a regiment to serve in the Rhineland.

But Sarah devoted no further attention to the matter:

Windsor Lodge  
July 6th, 1734

I have at this time no letter, my dear, of yours to answer.

I begin with mentioning a thing I have heard which I am sorry for. Which is that the Duke of Bedford notwithstanding all his just aversion to architects is now in some danger. And that there is a proposal to take away a great deal of ground between his house and the square, to make the house, as they call it, stand lofty, and great. This, I imagine, must occasion more steps to go into the house; which is no desirable thing in my poor opinion. And it may occasion twenty other inconveniences by digging and altering shores, and pipes for water; but I am arguing in the dark of a thing, whereof I know no particulars. All I am sure of is, that when I saw Bedford House and courts, I did believe it was the charmingest place in the world. And I am confident that it is impossible for anybody to mend it; but I do think there is no impossibility for a great architect to make it worse.

When I had written so far, I received your dear letter dated the 4th of July, which requires no answer but a great many thanks to the Duke of Bedford and you.

When you go to Althorp, I hope you will spare so much time as to draw a few lines of that side of the house next to the park, and show how the water stands, which I am told is at least ten

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acres. And this seems to be a great deal out of that little park. And I fancy you could in a minute make such a description of it that I may see how it stands.

I am most tenderly yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Tuesday

I forgot to say in my letter that there is no one thing in a house that one could wish for that is not done or doing at Bedford House, except the tops of the chimneys, which must all be painted to imitate stone. Because the whole house is stone. There is a little pattern made to show the Duke of Bedford, if he likes it, and it is absolutely necessary it should be done, where a house appears to be all stone. Though what the great architects did for me at Wimbledon was ridiculous. For they put real stone upon the shafts of my chimneys, which was expensive and a great weight only to make them ugly. For as that house was all brick and only some dressings of stone, the chimneys should have been coped at top with stone.

It is curious that Sarah should refer to Bedford House as being a stone building, for all available records imply that it was of brick; and, moreover, this had been made a point of by Sir Roger Pratt — he was one of the commissioners for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire — when, in 1660, he published his notes on comparative architecture. Just because the house was of brick, he emphasized, it was of necessity a low built structure. But by the time Sarah saw the mansion it is quite likely that the brickwork or a great part of it had been faced with stone. The next letter shows that her granddaughter was able to allay her fears concerning possible alterations in the courtyard. Thirty years later, when pipes for water had indeed been laid, Sarah's prescience was justified, in that there was a terrible to do between the owner of the house and the New River Company about the way in which the work had been done and the damage wrought to the pavement before the house.<sup>1</sup>

From Bedford House in Bloomsbury to John Spencer's house at Althorp and to a renewed consideration of the portraits for Wimbledon:

<sup>1</sup> Scott Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-1.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

Saturday  
July 13th, 1734

I thank you, my dear Angel, for your letter by your footman, and I am very glad to hear that what I was told is not true concerning the court at Bedford House; for as you describe it, it will be perfectly agreeable, and a much finer thing than anybody in England has. And I shall always wish you may be pleased with everything that in the least concerns you.

Since I wrote you to desire you would describe where the water is at Althorp, your brother has made me understand where that is; so that you need have no trouble about that; but I should be glad if you have time when you are there, that you would make me a little sketch that I might see what is built in the first court, where the building for the still house was. Likewise a few lines will show what is done from the gate house up to the front of the house, where the coaches used to go in.

I like extremely your thought of being dressed like the Countess of Bedford's Vandyke, and likewise to have Mr. Whood copy the dress of the famous picture at Althorp of my Lords of Bristol and Bedford. To be sure it is finely done, and I remember to have heard it much commended; but I do not remember more of it than that it was two figures, for I never take much notice of anything, when I do not know the persons, unless they are handsome.

I hope it will be no offence to Mr. Whood if I recommend you to take the posture of that figure that stands most properly to suit with yours that is to be copied from the Countess of Bedford. For you must be done just in the posture of this Countess of Bedford and consequently the picture of your Duke of Bedford must be either my Lord Bristol or Bedford as those figures happen to be drawn to look upon you; but for the dress you may take which of the earls' you like best. I believe as you have contrived it, it will be a very pleasing picture; for Mr. Whood if he will take pains may certainly be able to copy it if he is not so conceited as to have fancies of his own to mind it. For painters, poets and builders have very high flights but they must be kept down. You will not forget to make a bargain with Mr. Whood, since most people, as well as he, are apt to overvalue their work.

I had a letter from your brother Marlborough this day, who

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

says you looked extremely well; but I had much rather he had told me your shape was not so slender as it was.

Your sister Spencer is bigger a good deal, though she is not quick. She looks better than I ever saw her, and never wears any powder. And I really think she is much better for that; for her golden locks do certainly become her. And as your brother is of that opinion I believe she will despise the fashion; for she is extremely in love, though he is always dressed like a keeper or farmer. They both appear equally happy, and I hope it will ever continue so. I am ever yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Pray present my service to Mr. Hetherington. I thank you for your kind wishes for my health; which is much as it was notwithstanding all the care I take. I am as weak as ever I was; but I am not in any great pain; the worst of my complaints is that I cannot sleep in less than four or five hours after I go to bed, and sometimes longer.

Diana appears now to have given in over the question of the dress which Mr. Whood was to show her as wearing in his portrait of her. It may have been she rather than Sarah who had made the suggestion that if she was to be shown in a costume of a century back, it would be as well that her husband should be depicted in a costume of similar date. Perhaps she had been inspired by the charm of the picture at Althorp, one of the most admired pieces of Vandyke, in which young William Russell, afterwards fifth Earl and first Duke of Bedford is seen with his friend who became his brother-in-law — George Digby, afterwards second Earl of Bristol. Russell is dressed in scarlet, Digby in black; both young men wear wide spreading lace collars, almost capes, the lovely design of the lace caught for ever by Vandyke's brush.

But Sarah held fast to her view that artists, like architects and poets, *hoc genus omnes*, must be kept in their places:

Windsor Lodge

July 18th, 1734

I thank you for your kind letter, my dear, of the 16th.

I really believe Mr. Whood has so much mind to do the picture, and such opportunities of your sitting often, that with the

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

help of Vandyke's postures and clothes it will be an extreme fine thing. And if he adds a good likeness, the picture will be invaluable to me. I think the agreement you have made as to price is very reasonable; but do not say that to him, for it will make him mount up other occasions. I hope he will do this so well, as to bring him into great reputation. Seeman copies very well, and sometimes draws the faces like. I really think that picture of your Grandfather with Mr. Armstrong in my bed-chamber in London was as like him as ever I saw, and he was so humble as to ask me but seventeen guineas for both figures. I do not say this to find fault with Mr. Whood's price; for I expected he would ask a great deal more and I wish he may deserve it.

Seeman would have been one of the four brothers — Enoch, Isaac, Noah and Abraham — who were all painters and all flourished about this time. They were the sons of Enoch Seeman, the elder, likewise a painter, who had migrated with his family from East Prussia to England in the first years of the century. Noah and Abraham were chiefly known as miniaturists; both Enoch and Isaac were of some repute as portrait painters; and it was almost certainly one of these two who had made the picture for Sarah. It was, presumably, a copy of the portrait of the Duke with Mr. Armstrong, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, preserved at Blenheim.<sup>1</sup>

Existing accounts at Woburn show Mr. Isaac Whood asking five guineas for a portrait. Now he had evidently put up his price. He was probably quite justified in so doing. But there were others than artists and architects who could put up their prices too; and Sarah kept a watchful eye all round, whether on her own immediate behalf or in the interests of the family estates. 'When', the letter continued:

you happen to see the Duke of Marlborough I wish you would take an opportunity, if you think it would be of any use, to read as follows. He sent a servant here lately (I think his name is Dodd) and his business at the Little Lodge was to make hay. And when he came to ask me if I had any commands for Althorp, I

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Catalogue National Portrait Exhibition*, 1867, No. 87.

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

asked him how many loads of hay he had made and how much it cost the doing? He answered seventy six loads, which cost, mowing and making, forty six pounds. This I reckon is a very little thing more than twelve shillings a load, which is double the price that has yet been ever given in either of these parks. This, to be sure, has never been done with the very best management. And I asked Gill, that was my Lord Godolphin's keeper, what it used to cost when he made it for him, without letting him know why I asked the question, and he told me the charge of it was, one year with another, six shillings an acre. And this year has happened with them to be a good year for it. The mowing hay in my park, I used to pay half a crown an acre for. And as the ground is worse and has a great many more molehills than the little park, I think it ought to cost more than what is so extreme even and fine as that is in the little park. And I have not found the people I employ here over scrupulous in making bills. And I know my neighbours hereabouts give but twenty pence or two shillings for morning only. It is probable the Duke of Marlborough may think £20 nothing; but it is a great deal in £46. And if this Dodd be a steward and trusted with sums of money for other considerable payments, he will soon get an estate. If your brother cares to come to the certainty of this thing he should not tell him anything of this, but make somebody read his account for making this hay, if he will not do it himself. Otherwise he will say that I mistook him, which I can be very positive I did not. Or at least if it be ordered so, that he sees this extraordinary thing is discovered, he may say that he mistook himself. And there is no way of knowing the truth, but by some careless way, without showing suspicion.

I do not care for writing to the Duke of Marlborough myself about it because I do see that he seldom makes answers in a long time, and when he does they are not full ones. However, you may perhaps be able to do him some service. I am labouring like a packhorse every day to save him from the cheats.

Upon the whole — though his revenue will be very considerable when I am dead — you will be able to judge, whether it is not necessary for him to retrench in all reasonable things on account of the vast loads of his own debts, and to look into his own expenses so far as not to pay double what he ought to

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

do. I cannot help saying to you that it is very unpleasant to go through so much drudgery for one that will not trouble himself to write ten lines in answer to things that only concern himself. That puts me in mind of a fine saying of Caesar's, when he was begged to read a paper because it concerned himself, he answered: for that reason I will do it last. But he was a king. And if the Duke of Marlborough takes that example, he will very soon bring himself into insuperable difficulties.

At this point Sarah's stay at the Lodge at Windsor was cut short. She received news of the illness of Lady De la Warr, Sarah's relative and her own friend; and hastened to town:

London

July 20th, 1734

You will receive a letter from me, my dear, by this post written at Windsor, which I left this day from receiving a letter from Betty Arbor who said my Lady Delawar was extremely ill and upon an inquiry of mine to know how she did, said, she wished mightily to see me, but knew it was impossible. That made me leave Windsor as soon as I could. I have seen her, but I found her better than I feared I should have done, but what it will end in I cannot judge. She thinks she was hurt in her labour and has a fever every night. I heartily wish she may recover and I hope she may; for she is certainly better than she was when she sent me that message. I think she has a great many very valuable qualities.

I design to go to Windsor again upon Monday though I do not like London the less for having no company in it, and being as quiet here as at the Lodge, I have been entertaining myself with Sir William Temple. Some part of which I will repeat to you because I think it true and extremely pretty, which is as follows: the greatest pleasure of life is love, the greatest treasure contentment, the greatest possession health, the greatest ease is sleep, the greatest medicine is a true friend. Happiness of life depends much on natural temper. You are luckier in that than most people I ever knew, and I do not doubt but that your good understanding will make you as perfectly happy as I wish you, who are most tenderly yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

Diana faithfully wrote to her grandmother at Marlborough House, and at once received a letter in return:

Monday

July 22nd, 1734

I thank you, my dear, for yours of yesterday. I am just come from poor Lady Delawar and though I can do her no great service, I am glad I did come to town, because in my life I never saw anybody express such joy as she did to see me and I am sure it was real. It is certain she is a great deal better than when I first saw her. And this night she spoke with a great deal of spirit and was hungry; and her temper when I was there was very good and her pulse has beat less and less quick every time I have seen her. And her eyes look extremely well, which I always think a good sign. She has promised me to take things she would not take of Doctor Hollins's directing. For it is certain she has no better opinion of doctors than I have; and thinks they order a great deal only on account of carrying on the trade.

But Mr. Stephens who has very good sense and has no design but being very honest, is of the opinion, that what Dr. Hollins desired before I came to town is very proper.

One of her complaints is something that I cannot write; but as she is much better of that I hope she will get over it. But there is one thing nobody yet can tell what it proceeds from; which is a great many pimples upon her throat, arms, breasts, feet and head, that they do not know yet what they are. And as she is dreadfully afraid of the smallpox, they have given it some hard name, that I cannot remember. I hope it will not prove the smallpox, because that is a distemper which has so many turns. Besides her circumstances at this time are very unlucky for that. But if it should prove the smallpox, I think it will be a favourable sort, for they are distinct. And I fancy she could not have so much spirit if it were.

She has certainly all the good qualities that you think she has; but I am convinced that her lord is a thorough wretch; for he left her yesterday morning, when I could not bring myself to go out of town, till I saw a little farther, to go with my Lord Godolphin to Gog Magog; which is only to eat and drink and he thinks it has a good air, and may do him some



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good. I remember I used to think it impossible for a woman with so much honour and so much sense to be quite blind to what is so contrary in him though she would never let anybody perceive it. But this last action is so indecent that people can no longer say, as they used to do, Oh! but he is very kind to her. She did not say a word of it to me and you may be sure that I said nothing to let her see I was surprised at such a behaviour.

I am very uneasy to be here without meat or anything that is agreeable; but I intend to go to Windsor to-morrow after I am informed by Mr. Stephens how poor Lady Delawar does. She has the happiness of having a very faithful and affectionate servant with her, which is better than the generality of most people's relations. I am for ever yours and the Duke of Bedford's.

S. MARLBOROUGH

The Gog Magog district in Cambridgeshire, whither the husband of the invalid had departed — an action on his part on which Sarah placed the worst interpretation — had at this time a considerable reputation as a health resort. The air from the hills was thought to be especially salubrious, and great importance was attached to good air, particularly as a specific against infection of smallpox, a fact of which Lord De la Warr was probably cognisant.

To do Sarah justice, she had not shrunk from making visits to a possible smallpox patient. And throughout these summer days, when she divided her time between her friend's sick-room and her own apartments in Marlborough House — quiet now that fashion had gone out of town, so that she could read and meditate on what she read without interruption — she herself was far from well:

Marlborough House

August 2nd, 1734

I have just now received your letter, my dear, with the plan of Althorp Court, which I think I understand very well.

My Lady Delawar is growing better and better every day; so that I think all danger is over. But there are different

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opinions as to the smallpox. Some are positive it was that and what they call the wart kind. Dr. Hollings, I think, still continues of the opinion that it was the chicken pox. But I never heard that that continued so many days. And I believe what she had is not yet gone.

I believe Sunninghill waters are much the same as Tonbridge and much more agreeable by being able to take them in one's own house. But I cannot say they have yet done me either good or hurt. For my limbs are weak as they used to be; and I am tormented as much as ever with the itching; which I suppose is the scurvy. I am tired to death with the lawyers about the Blenheim cheats, and a good deal with my own business at Wimbledon.

And I cannot now fix the day of my returning to Windsor; but I hope it will be soon. I am so hurried I can say no more but the old truth that I am most affectionately yours and the Duke of Bedford's.

S. MARLBOROUGH

The 'torment' of the scurvy — Sarah's use of the word was probably very just — must have greatly added to the misery of the gout. Judging by subsequent letters, the skin trouble appeared to be increasing; and at this point Sarah, having to stay in London, sought alleviation from waters of a spa in the neighbourhood of the metropolis:

Marlborough House

August 5th, 1734

I have received yours, my dear, this minute, of the 4th August and I assure you the correspondence I have with you is the greatest happiness I have in the world or can ever have.

I am just come from my Lady Delawarr. And I venture my limbs whenever I go to her by being carried upstairs in a chair, not much better than a ladder. She is out of all danger and can walk about the room. She looks pale and thin but now eats very well without being sick. And I hope and believe she will be better in her health than she has been for many years.

I hope to be at Windsor again this week, but I cannot yet fix the day. I have begun to drink the waters called Dog and Duck, which will carry very well to Windsor. They have

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done a vast deal of good in the scurvy and sharp humours to several people. And I do think they will do me good. I can stand and help myself a little better than I did, and all my ambition is to be a little easier and to walk with two sticks.

I have been at Wimbledon and when the house is furnished it will be a delightful place to my taste. And I do think it is a great addition to have it within an hour's driving to London upon a good road. If I had had only myself and the Duke of Bedford's bricklayers it would have been the finest place in the world. But I have always had the misfortune to suffer very great mischiefs from the assistance of architects. The cutting through the terrace is almost as bad as setting the house in a pit. And the wall of it is so very ill done, that I believe it must be pulled down a third time.

The lady you say was so gracious and good humoured is as vile a woman as I know; and her husband both a fool and a knave; but she is interesting and has wit, which is what I cannot say of my other acquaintance whose name I have not written. I am most tenderly and faithfully yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

The spring, of which one name was the Dog and the Duck, was situated on the edge of the fields, known as St. George's Fields, which lay half a mile north-east of Lambeth. In those fields Gerard, collecting specimens for his Herbal, had found water violets in abundance as nowhere else. But the marshy land was also favoured by sportsmen and the sign of the inn which stood there — it is heard of at least as early as 1643 — was a spaniel carrying a duck in his mouth. Hence, when it was found that the waters of the spring, close to the inn, had properties which medical men pronounced to be of value for treatment of skin diseases and cancerous affections, they became familiarly known by the same name as the inn boasted. So Sarah still called them, although a few years back those interested in the spring had endeavoured to substitute the more elegant name of St. George's Spa. It is, however, quite likely that Sarah never went to the spring itself at all; for the water was put up in bottles, which were sold at a

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

shilling apiece; and these she probably had brought to her at Marlborough House.<sup>1</sup>

By September she was back at Windsor:

Windsor Lodge

September 11th, 1734

I must thank you, my dear Angel, in the first place for your very good birds, which, though you gave them so bountifully, kept sweet to the last. I wish I had anything to send you that could be agreeable to you, but that is not now in my power. My itching continues but I sleep better than I used to do, and the humour is not so sharp. You will remember how you were frightened when you saw my legs, and my arms and other places were in the same manner. But I have not now one plaster upon me, nor any part sore. And I am certainly a great deal better than I was. And by only putting my two hands on the arms of my chair, I can rise up without being helped; which is more than I have been able to do a long time; but for walking or being quite well, that I must never expect. What has made such an alteration in my condition has proceeded from pure accident. First, the diet drink which Mr. Stephens read to you, and I have added to it a small quantity, not enough to purge of gum guaiacum which they say is mighty good for rheumatic pains and the gout also. I was told by a woman in my neighbourhood that it would do me good, if I put pomatum on the sore part. I had none, nor do not know what it is made of; but I sent to the keepers to send me some deer suet which has done me a vast deal of good, and my legs are now very little swelled, which they used to be often.

Pray tell Dr. Carleton this, with my humble service and ask him what he thinks of this, and the remedies I use.

I have written you a letter upon nothing, which you will forgive because I love to converse with you any way I can, and am most tenderly yours and the Duke of Bedford's.

S. MARLBOROUGH

The fat from the deer, which was sometimes used in the form

<sup>1</sup> A painting of the *Assembly Room of the Dog and the Duck*, 1789, was shown at the exhibition *Changed London* in 1943 (*vide Country Life*, page 527). A drawing *At the Dog and Duck* is in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle (No. 13762).

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

of a pomade, but which Sarah may have used almost in its natural state was not, unfortunately, of any very great service:

Windsor Lodge

September 21st, 1734

I wrote to you, my dear, last night by the Windsor post which you will have upon Sunday. This being the wrong post day for London, you cannot receive it till Wednesday.

I thank you and Dr. Carleton for his advice; and I will use the deer's suet as seldom as I can; for I think it is reasonable to fear that any greasy thing may repel the humour. And though it did ease me in some part of my complaint, the smarting; I believe it is better to bear a little than to continue it: but I believe when one has distempers, and is eased sometimes by a little medicine, it generally gives some new complaint, and the best I know, in most cases, is patience. Except the soreness, I have not been so well since I used the suet, but I hope it will go over.

I am mighty glad of the account you give me of Mr. Whood's performance. I am sure it will be a very agreeable picture to me, and I will send you notice when Mr. Whood shall bring it to me.

I wrote you word that my Lord Clancarty was dead: which I think is happy for him, and it can be no loss to anybody; though my Lady Clancarty looked grave, which was right, but she endeavoured to squeeze out a tear which I think was too much. Quality, I believe, she does like very well; but I believe her's is nothing, for as her father-in-law was outlawed I suppose it is only civility and courtesy in people to call her my Lady Clancarty.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

There is some doubt whether the Earl of Clancarty, father-in-law of Sarah's friend, Lady Muskerrey, had died on September 17th or whether the news of his decease had been prematurely announced and that the death in fact took place two days later than the date of Sarah's letter, on October 1st, at the Earl's house, on an island in the Elbe, by Altona.<sup>1</sup> There was also the uncer-

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Peerage*, III, p. 217 n.b.

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

tainty, as Sarah was aware, whether or no the attainder had been legally reversed. If not, then the son had not been entitled to call himself, as he had done, Viscount Muskerry; nor was he now, by succession, Earl of Clancarty. But Sarah, as well as others, seems to have given him and his wife the benefit of the doubt. She left him an annuity.

The trouble from the scurvy continued, and it was a most exhausting complaint:

Windsor Lodge

September 24th, 1734

I thank you, my dear, for your letter of the 22nd which I have this minute received.

Last night I was terribly tormented with my itching, and I am now sore again, which I should not have been, if I had gone on with using the deers' suet; but I am resolved to bear it, being satisfied that any greasy thing repels; and when the smarting was ceased, I was not so well in my stomach. But I am sure whatever I do, I can never be well. And at my age, as Sir William Temple says, the play is not worth the candles.

You said once that Sir William Temple was an author that was your favourite. I entertained myself with him last night upon the subject of my health; pray read it. You will find that he recommends much to young people drinking a good deal of water and little wine; which certainly does hurt to the blood. And I remember that Queen Anne never brought any children likely to live till she took that method of drinking a good deal of water, and eat a great deal of milk. And after that, the Duke of Gloucester was born.

I cannot yet say when it will be easy for me to part with Mr. Stephens; but he shall come, and whenever it is, I know he likes better to go on horseback than in a coach.

I am ever yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

Sarah was passionately anxious that Diana should bear another child. She herself, as October came in, was worse in health rather than better:

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Windsor Lodge  
October 14th, 1734

I am just as I was with all my complaints. I have no more use of my limbs than a child bound up in swaddling clothes; but I have spirits still and my heart will always be the same to you as it has ever been.

And with unabated spirit, indeed, she went on her way:

Windsor Lodge  
October 15th, 1734

I wrote to you last night, my dear angel, by the post; but having received yours of the 13th this morning, I cannot help thanking you for it.

And for your keeping your picture to copy one for Bedford House, it will be no manner of inconvenience to me, since the room cannot be finished till after you have done with the picture, your brother Marlborough not having begun to sit. And Seeman has spoiled Johnny's picture that was so well begun by putting on an odious periwig full of powder: so that it must be new done, for I hate of all things powder in a picture. And I hope both yours and the Duke of Bedford's is with your own coloured hair. Perhaps, there may not be room in the hall at Bedford House to go right in the panels, to have yours and the Duke's in one piece; but I think you should be there.

As to my complaints in my health, they are just as they were, and the weather so bad this day that I cannot go out, but still this place is better than London when you are not in it. For I know nobody there, but such as to give one a great deal of trouble, and none that gives me any pleasure.

My Lady Delawarr is out of town, who has written me the most reasonable letter that ever I saw. and very prettily and agreeably turned. I have wondered mightily that all the women of your family should write so well, and the men so very indifferent, to say the best.

When I was at London, I saw Mrs. Dunch sometimes. And though she has something a little trifling in her conversation she has certainly very good judgment, very good nature, and very well bred in a mighty easy way without giving anybody any trouble.

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

I was told your aunt Montague and her Duke are grown excessive fond of one another, which is quite new on one side. And that my Lady Cardigan lives very well in the country with her husband, which I hope is true, for it is better late than never; and I am persuaded that my Lord Cardigan is a very good young man. I am always yours and the Duke of Bedford's.

S. MARLBOROUGH.

Lady Cardigan was the daughter of Sarah's only surviving daughter Mary, Duchess of Montagu and so herself a granddaughter of Sarah. She had married George Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, four years before this time.

The hall of Bedford House, into which the portrait of Diana — a copy of the one Mr. Whood had made for Wimbledon — and one of her husband were to go, had already pictures on the walls. Among them, added recently, was a portrait of Sarah herself:

Windsor Lodge

October 21st, 1734

I wrote to you last night, my dear angel, by the post and this morning I have yours of the 20th to thank you for.

I think your hall at Bedford House will be very properly furnished, and I daresay what Whood copies will be extreme well; all I ever doubted of him was his fancy. I remember my picture there is powdered, which I think is mighty ugly; but as Sir Godfrey Kneller did that for himself, I never knew anything of it till many years after his death I saw it at his house in the country. But I believe that cannot be altered now without running the hazard of doing hurt to the picture. But it was a very odd fancy in him to make my hair look like the Queen's when she came first into England, clotted all over with powder, when I fancy the best thing I had was the colour of my hair.

Sarah had expressed her dislike for powdered hair in real life, as in portraits, more than once, and always with emphasis. It must have been doubly offensive to her to have her own hair shown as powdered — that lovely hair, always, it was said, washed in honey water to preserve its colour, which she had once, in a



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passion cut, or partly cut, to annoy her Duke and he, said Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who told the tale, had kept the severed locks in his cabinet, where they were found after his death.

That was long since, when her hair had shone in all its radiant luxuriance. But Sarah, in old age, was Sarah still. Peace with her surroundings was never for her for long:

‘I went’, the letter continued

to Maidenhead to meet your brother John, where he lay in his way to London. I heard of it by chance and like a lover went away to see them, carrying a great many lights to bring me back safe; for I could not expect they would be there till it was near dark. I carried some good things with me, and bespoke others when I came there. I made the house warm and expected them for two hours. When they came in, I told John what I had done, to which he answered they had dined ten miles off. That I did not wonder at, for he could not know the pains I had taken. But as you know it is generally my way to sup instead of dining I answered: presently, why then, we will sup together. To which, he replied that he had bespoke supper at another house, and that he had Mr. and Mrs. Gold with him. What they are I do not know, but I do, that one of his company was Mr. Lofton, a man that was lately a servant to the Duke of St. Albans. Then I said: let them send me some dinner as soon as they can.

I did not design that he should see that I felt anything; but I must own I thought if I had been in his place, as he knows I have often said he might bring anybody he liked to me and welcome, he should have showed some satisfaction at my coming, and should have said he would either bring his company to me, or have sent them word that they should sup by themselves, as I liked best, which to be sure was what would be most easy to them all.

As soon as I had dined I made them easy and went away, without showing the least dissatisfaction at this reception. But I fear my countenance has something too sincere in it, and that he might possibly discover by my face the first minute that it was a little shock to me, for the next morning he came to Windsor Lodge though, he knows from not sleeping of nights I never wake till twelve o’clock. And as it is dark so soon, he could not stay a moment.

## LONDON AND WINDSOR

In this, I think, he took a very unnecessary trouble for, if he had done what I think had been most natural at Maidenhead — at least it would have been to me — he might have gone on with his charming company to London; for it would have been full enough in that case to have sent a footman to Windsor Lodge to have known that I got home safe.

But he has, it seems quite another way of thinking and feeling, and therefore he chose this high compliment. And we parted here without my taking any notice of what had happened, or of his making the least excuse.

Mrs. Spencer, I think, looks as well in her face, as she used to do, and behaved extremely easily and agreeably in everything. And therefore I hope they will always be happy.

It was the eternal story of the carelessness of youth and the demands of age — and Sarah made more demands than most. Now having said her say, she fell back upon philosophy:

‘I am’, she went on

every day more and more convinced that, as there is very little that is good or pleasant in this world, there can be no reason for one to apprehend death, or think it an evil. That which must happen some time or other to everybody that is born, and when it does come puts an end to all one’s troubles. For in this life I am satisfied there is nothing to be done but to make the best of what cannot be helped, to act with reason oneself and with a good conscience. And though that will not give all the joys some people wish for, yet it will make one very quiet.

## SUMMER—AUTUMN, 1735

EITHER no letters were sent during the first half of the year 1735 or if sent, none have survived. The earliest letter for the year is dated in June. And now Diana, like John Spencer, was given a name taken from a tale:

Thursday  
June 5th, 1735

I thank you, my dear Cordelia, for yours of the 1st of June. That is the name I intend to call you, for the future, which I think is the name of King Lear's good child, and therefore a proper title for you, who have been always good to me. I am extreme glad to find you are in so good a way as to your health and that you are so well pleased with the improvements at Woburn. And I hope you may find that the house may likewise be made very agreeable without pulling down. You know I was never fond of great apartments, but to have everything that is useful and mighty clean and cheerful to live in a comfortable way, and to make all one's friends convenient and easy. I do hope to see you at Woburn this summer, but can't say when, I have so much business at Wimbledon and at London too.

I don't know whether I shall have much occasion to make use of the figures I send you, but 'tis no harm to lie by you, because 'tis disagreeable when one has anything to say to write people's names by the post.

S. MARLBOROUGH

The cheerful note of this letter persisted in the next:

Tuesday  
June 24th, 1735

I am very glad to find by my dear Cordelia's of the 19th of this month that she would like to hear from me oftener.

I wrote to you Saturday last and do not remember as you say, that I missed three posts before. I am always very busy, but as

I love to converse with you anyway, unless some extraordinary thing has happened, I should always be writing whatever I picked up.

I have now full employment in furnishing Wimbledon, and it is a great pleasure and amusement to be dressing up and making a place pretty that I designed for my dear Cordelia. But I have this alloy, that I fear soon after it is done some of the dependants upon France will have the possession of it. The furniture I think extremely handsome and will be almost all new.

I never in my life heard so strange a thing as happened at an opera not long before the King left England. Mr. Seymour, who is member of parliament for Marlborough, at a great distance from His Majesty, was in some box over the stage, or somewhere high, and His Majesty observed that there was a man in a hat, at which he was very much offended; and after speaking of it with some warmth he sent my Lord C— up to him, and he told Mr. Seymour as civilly as he could, that His Majesty would have him pull off his hat. Mr. Seymour answered that he was ill, and could not do it for fear of catching cold. Several very curious messages followed, but all in vain; for Mr. Seymour said that he had paid for his place and he would not prejudice his health. And a great deal passed that is not to be written; but Mr. Seymour stood to his point.

Another extraordinary thing happened of much the same nature. The famous dancing woman (I do not know her name) in the opera, the audience were so excessive fond of her that they hollered out 'encore' several times to have her dance over again, which she could not do, because as she was coming on again, the King made a motion with his hand that she should not. At last the dispute was so violent that to put an end to it, the curtain was let down, whereby the spectators lost all after the third act.

I forgot to give an account in this great struggle concerning the hat, His Majesty ordered the guard to go up and take it away; but his servants in the box prevailed with him not to do it, saying he was an ill-bred country gentleman but was of a great family and had many friends and it would make a noise which was better not to do. Mr. Seymour agreed with those that carried the King's message that he had chosen to sit in a place

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

that he thought would give no offence, on account of his ill health, that he should have thought it very wrong to have done anything of that sort in the King's palaces, but there were no kings at operas or playhouses where everybody might sit as they pleased.

I am told there is a German lady to come soon into England. It is between two, and not yet determined which it shall be. All I know is, that it is my Lady Chesterfield's sister as was once talked of. She is to supply the place of my Lady Suffolk, but what is most extraordinary is, that it is said Her Majesty is very desirous of her being here. If that be so, as I believe it is, this lady being a stranger in this country I suppose Her Majesty designs to instruct her in everything she is to do.

Since I began this letter I have received yours of the 22nd; and am very glad to hear what you say concerning your confinement. The method you intend to take is certainly all right and I hope in God it will succeed as I wish.

I am going to Rysbrack to make a bargain with him for a fine statue of Queen Anne, which I will put up in the bow window room at Blenheim with a proper inscription. It will be a very fine thing and though but one figure will cost me £300. I have a satisfaction in showing this respect to her, because her kindness to me was real. And what happened afterwards was compassed by the contrivance of such as are in power now.

I give the Duke of Bedford many thanks for the trouble he designs in trying to soften Mr. Hillesdon. All I know the case he sent appeared hard to me, but I shall be very well satisfied whatever happens in that matter.

I am always yours,

S. MARLBOROUGH

The news, so eagerly awaited, that Diana now believed herself to be again with child, must have given Sarah much pleasure. It lent perhaps an additional zest to the work at Wimbledon; for this letter makes clear what she reiterated later — when her hopes were laid waste — that what she did there, was done with the thought that all was for Diana.

The past, too, had called to her. The statue she was putting up of Queen Anne bears the inscription: *To the memory of Queen*

*Anne, under whose auspices John, Duke of Marlborough conquered, and to whose munificence he and his posterity with gratitude owe the possession of Blenheim.*<sup>1</sup>

The scene at the opera had probably taken place at Rich's new theatre in Covent Garden. His Majesty, in his devotion to Handel, always patronized the theatre in which that composer's operas were being performed; and in November of the previous year Handel had moved his company from the King's theatre in the Haymarket to the house in Covent Garden. There, as in the Haymarket house, the King often sat in his box, looking down at a half-empty house, for a very strong and fashionable anti-Handel party, headed by the Prince of Wales, supported the Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, where was performed what was known as the 'opera of the nobility'. But in April of this year Handel had had a considerable success at the first performance of his new opera of *Alcina*. The subject was taken from the sixth and seventh cantos of Orlando Furioso and, says Burney, relating the story in his *History of Music*,<sup>2</sup> had been set by Handel with the violence appropriate to his conflict with his rivals at Lincoln's Inn Fields. *Alcina* met with the instant and warm approval of His Majesty and was, continues Dr. Burney, always performed by the royal command whenever the King attended the opera during the spring months of this year prior to his departure for Hanover. The scene with Mr. Seymour may have been a little unusual of its kind but lively incidents were by no means unknown in the front of the house. In the same year a free fight in the corridors and foyer of the Haymarket theatre ended in the death of a footman.

The King's visit to Hanover—one of the triennial visits on which he insisted—had been opposed—to no effect—by Sir Robert Walpole, partly on account of the unrest in Europe but partly also because, as Lord Hervey remarked, it was one thing for Sir Robert to carry papers from his home in Chelsea to Kensington Palace and quite another for him to have to make the journey to Hanover. No protests had availed—the King had gone—and

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 651.

<sup>2</sup> v, pp. 383 *seq.*

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

while in Hanover had acquired a new mistress. The lady was the young, fashionable and married Amelia Sophia Walmoden, whom after his queen's death, George was to create Countess of Yarmouth. But, in these early months of this new connection, His Majesty found himself in difficulties between two ladies. His former mistress in Hanover had been Madame d'Elitz. She may have been a sister, or a half sister, or, as some accounts say, a cousin, of Lady Chesterfield, who had been Melusina de Schulenberg, daughter of George I by his favourite mistress Ermengarde Melusina, *suo jure* Duchess of Kendal. Madame d'Elitz, ill advisedly but not unnaturally, allowed herself the indulgence of a violent quarrel with her rival, and was deprived, by the royal command, of her palace in Hanover, whereupon she resolved to take refuge in England where her mother, the Duchess of Kendal, was still living. But it was not until the next year, 1736, that she made the journey. According to Lord Hervey, it was also not until 1736 that Queen Caroline invited the other lady's presence in England — 'you must love the Walmoden' her husband had written from Hanover 'for she loves me'. Lord Hervey further stated that Her Majesty went so far as to meet her husband's wishes as to propose to take the Walmoden into her service as Mistress of the Robes, in succession to the Countess of Suffolk who, herself a discarded favourite of the King, had resigned her office in 1735, and shortly afterwards had married Mr. George Berkeley. In her account Sarah seems to have telescoped the two ladies from Hanover but as neither arrived in England until the following year her remarks were only anticipatory, based on court gossip — and of that there was plenty. In the meantime there was another candidate for the office of Mistress of the Robes.

Mrs. Clayton was the wife of William Clayton, an official of the Treasury, some time member for St. Albans and also for Westminster. She had been bedchamber woman to Queen Caroline and stood high in the latter's favour, reading philosophy and divinity—the latter not always of the orthodox kind—with her royal mistress. It is said that she succeeded Lady Suffolk as Mistress of the Robes in May of 1735 almost immediately after

the latter's resignation of the office. But on this point there is some doubt.<sup>1</sup> But when, on June 2nd in this year, Mr. Clayton was created Baron Sundon of Ardagh in county Longford, the honour, so it was said, had been conferred at the instance of his wife and by virtue of the Queen's friendship for her. Either just before or just after they had been ennobled, the couple had their portraits painted:

Wednesday

July 2nd, 1735

Though I hope to have a letter by this post from my dear Cordelia, I begin to write in the morning for fear of accidental interruption; and yet I have nothing to say that is new, only an account of a picture I saw yesterday, which diverted me so much that I will endeavour to describe it to you.

It is drawn in the manner of Hogarth's conversation pieces, but not by him, nor with a design to ridicule; but seriously directed to be done by my Lord and Lady Sundon, who are sitting at a table in their supposed library. My Lord has a book in one hand a paper in the other; but what that contains does not appear. There are some books lying on the table besides. The paper may be a proposal for some good law in the house of Commons, but I can only guess at that. There stands by Mr. Clayton a bookcase, with the doors thrown open. And a servant, who I suppose is a page, with a book taken out of the bookcase, which my Lady Sundon holds out her hand to take. My Lord Sundon has something like a rich curtain or canopy, I do not know what to call it, over him, but his clothes are very plain, which I think most proper for a great statesman. The face is extremely like him; but a good deal better. My Lady's picture I should not have known. Her dress is a fine pink colour with diamond buckles and a great deal of ruffled lace upon her head, and a bunch of pink coloured ribbons on the top of it, and a white apron. For you are to suppose she is undressed early at her studies. And, in short, I think nothing can be added to make these two figures better if I were to draw them myself; but to put two crowns on their chairs and to dress them in Irish robes. I would put it into the painter's head to try if he can

<sup>1</sup> *Hervey*, II, p. 30, but cf. *Complete Peerage*, 1896, VII, p. 322.



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

persuade them to it. But I must add a little more to this description which I think is incomparable.

Before I begin I must, to show you how proper the dress is, put you in mind that she was fourteen when King William came to England, or thereabouts. But to go on. This is a library furnished with pictures, and there are eight square pictures in two rows on the side of Lady Sundon, over her head. The first is Dr. Friend, Dr. Clarke, Sir Isaac Newton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tillotson-Lock and two other great philosophers, whose names I cannot remember. And the eighth which is nearest to my Lady Sundon, in the same row with these philosophers, is drawn, not as a queen, but in a familiar way, Her Majesty, whether to instruct these great men or to be informed I cannot say. Dr. Clarke having told me once that Her Majesty knew as much as he did, but that was when he hoped to be a bishop. I observed in this picture that there is more honour done to him than the rest. For, besides his picture, there is his bust in stone set on the top of the bookcase.

I have just now received yours, my dear, of the 1st of July. You may be very sure I will tell you the story as soon as I am at liberty. Mr. Bridgeman's account is a great mistake: for though I labour every day to get into Wimbledon, I doubt it will not be possible to be there in less than a month at soonest. But it is a pleasure to see furniture putting up, and it will be to my taste a delightful habitation.

So far the picture, if it is still in existence, has not been traced. It would almost be possible from Sarah's description to produce a replica of a painting which at once flattered my lord Sundon and his wife — the lady who studied in pink undress, as Sarah described her, 'that absurd and pompous simpleton', as Horace Walpole was to write of her, for the benefit of the Misses Berry — no less than Her Majesty herself in her favourite rôle of friend and patron of the learned.

So through July Sarah continued to write or rather dictate letters, for only one, the following letter, is in her own hand:

SUMMER — AUTUMN, 1735

Marlborough House

July 15th, 1735

I thank you, my dear Cordelia, for your kind letters of the 10th and 13th, and am very much pleased with the account you give in the first.

I hope in God all your care will succeed. Grace tells me that the whole time from the beginning to the end when she was with child of Nanny, she had violent purgings, which is unusual. I think there can be no doubt of your being with child, but perhaps not so long as you reckon. I hope you will continue to drink but very little wine; for I have reason to think that is a right method from several accounts I have heard of women that miscarried till they tried that way of drinking a great deal of water and sometimes milk. My Lady Portland says that it is an admirable thing to take every morning as soon as you wake a glass of spring water. And I have known some do it at night when they go to sleep. I do not know of my own knowledge what good has been done by it, but I am sure such advice can do no hurt.

I think just as you do of Mr. Littleton and his verses; likewise the same of my Lord Hervey who is certainly a vile creature, and if he did ever write anything that pleased us formerly it must have been something that he stole from other authors, for no notion that is right could arise from his own heart.

I need say nothing more than thanks concerning Mrs. Devenish. I never saw her in my life, and I think what you say is so reasonable of not taking new servants when not necessary, that it makes me remember that when I took Olive Loft because I knew her friends, I would not let her come in to me because I hate to see more than I want. But I am glad I took her because she is a good creature; and Grace has taught her a great many useful things. All I meant by what I wrote upon that subject was that if any accident happened, or that anybody you knew wanted a servant, I believe that by the character Mrs. Dunch gives of her that she is a valuable servant. You are much in the right in not taking anybody's character upon report, for most people give characters without good ground, and speak with partiality both ways, for and against people, as their passions incline them, or interest.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

What the new married lady has done puts me in mind of an ill natured saying of a man, that he would never pronounce his opinion of any woman's character till she was dead; for till then nobody would be sure what she would do. I do not know the lady, but I am enough acquainted with the man to think he would never have tempted me to have committed the least indiscretion, and it is said that all the men at least of that family are ill natured. He has nothing but a small place. She I fancy is near fifty years old, and to be sure she has at least a comfortable fortune to live upon.

My Lord Clancarty gives a dreadful account of the power of France. He says he saw eight thousand of as good troops as ever he saw in his life marching towards Portugal. That king has neither ships nor men, and Spain and France can disown them whenever they will. He likewise saw twenty French merchant ships going from Portugal, where they had been to trade, which to be sure very much lessens ours. And he says when France and Spain have disowned the Emperor, which is not far off, they will have more than a hundred thousand good troops to employ as they please. And they have now a great many ships fitting out at Brest, with which in a few hours they may burn all our ships, for though we have many ships we have no men, all our seamen being taken out and sent to Portugal, where we are to do nothing, because of the great friendship we have with France and Spain. And it is thought the French and Spanish will get the possession of Jamaica, which will make them entirely master of all trades, and ruin England entirely.

This is writing a great deal upon politics, which you will say neither you nor I understand, and therefore I think it would be better that we turned our studies to philosophy and to submit to what we cannot help, and be contented with a little food and raiment, which we may get from our new masters who ever they happen to be. However, I am proceeding to make Wimbledon as fine as I can, whoever will have the luck to possess it.

I am glad you have hope of keeping the Duchess of Manchester so long with you: for that will please you both, and I hope you have still Mrs. Kingdon with you.

I had yesterday a great deal of conversation with a very wise and great citizen, who is very knowing in foreign affairs, and

likewise the state of England. And he told me that it was plain that England would entirely be ruined but just the time he could not say. But he thought the mischiefs done could not possibly be recovered.

My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

Mr. Littleton was George Lyttleton, later better known as the first Baron Lyttleton. At first sight it looks as if Sarah disapproved of him and his poetry. But the sentences may be read another way. One of Mr. Lyttleton's earliest poems, written in 1727, when he was leaving Oxford to make the Grand Tour, had been an address in blank verse to Blenheim where:

In the calm shades of honourable ease  
Great Marlborough peaceful dwelt: indulgent Heaven  
Gave a companion to his softer hours,  
With whom conversing, he forgot all change  
Of fortune or of state, and in her mind  
Found greatness equal to his own and lov'd  
Himself in her. Thus each by each admired  
In mutual honour, mutual fondness joined;  
Like two fair stars, with intermingled light,  
In friendly union they together shone.

Sarah was not above quarrelling even with the author of such a verse. But in the same year in which she was writing Lyttelton had published a book of which she should have approved and almost certainly did approve. This was the *Letters from a Persian in England* — Montesquieu had now replaced Milton as a model — which included a violent attack upon Sir Robert Walpole as the destroyer of his country.

Mrs. Dunch, who had recommended a maidservant, was the daughter of Colonel Charles Godfrey and Arabella, sister of John Churchill.

The newly married lady cannot be identified with any certainty.

Lord Clancarty, the former Viscount Muskerry, using the titles which may or may not have been legally his, had, until recently, had command of a battleship. He was now on half pay.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

His character was not of the most estimable kind for, when, early this year, his ship had been lying in the Tagus it had been said of him that for a week or more he had been drunk for the twenty-four hours round. But his opinion of the ever increasing ascendancy of France in Europe and the possible consequences to England reflected that of the opposition — and of Sarah. Nevertheless Sir Robert Walpole was still strong enough to enforce his own policy; and it was to be another year before William Pitt first spoke in the House. Moreover, rightly or wrongly, it could be claimed, and was claimed, that the dispatch of a fleet to Portugal to prevent a conflict arising out of a trivial dispute between that country and Spain, proved that England still carried weight as a mediator on the continent.

During June everything had seemed to be going well. Even the paragraph in the letter of the fifteenth of July may indicate no more than the natural anxiety felt by Sarah for Diana's health. But presently doubts must have invaded her mind; and, as July wore to a close, it was impossible for Diana to disguise from her, or for her to disguise from herself that all was not as it should be:

Marlborough House

July 30th, 1735

I am extremely uneasy at the account my dear Cordelia gives of her being so sick, — you call it a perpetual sickness at your stomach — because that is something that I never heard of before. It is mighty common to have people sick in a morning, vomit sometimes, and till they are half gone with child have no inclination to eat anything. But to have a perpetual sickness in the stomach is what I never heard of and therefore hope you will give me a better account in your next. If you have been with child as long as you reckon, I should think you should be a good deal bigger, and it is not common to have people sick at all after they are five months gone with child. I am impatient to hear from you again and hope you will soon tell me that there is no reason to apprehend your not being as I wish.

But Sarah's interest in the world around her was abiding; and, with a determination that, in the light of later events, almost

approaches pathos, she continued to invite the sick girl to share those interests. 'There are', she went on,

two pieces of news that perhaps you may have heard of; however not being sure I will write them.

My Lord Peterborough has owned his marriage with Mrs. Robinson. He had a dangerous operation that was to be made and a clergyman that was with him at Bristol told him that Mrs. Robinson had suffered a great deal in her reputation upon his account, and if he was married to her he ought to own it. My Lord Peterborough said, that the King of France did not own Madame Maintenon, which in effect was owning it and putting himself in the place of the King of France. The clergyman pressed him on and said that was not the same case at all; and at last his Lordship declared to him that he had been married to her many years. After he was well enough to go into the public room, his manner of making this marriage so was to desire somebody to tell my Lady Peterborough that he would speak to her.

My other account is not so merry as this. There has been a long affair carried on between my Lord Jedburgh, my Lord Lothian's son, and my Lady Caroline D'Arcy. It is said that my Lord Jedburgh was perpetually at my Lady Fitzwalter's house dining and supping. And it is certain that for these two years my Lady Caroline has been carried to public places by her mother and always danced with my Lord Jedburgh, who the world says, is an extremely pretty sort of man. And the town says he proposed himself not long ago to my Lady Fitzwalter, who received the offer with many expressions, saying, that if her daughter liked it he was the man in the world she would most approve of. After this the Duke of Leeds waited on my Lady Fitzwalter and made his proposals, desiring to know if she was engaged in any other treaty. Her Ladyship said she was not and very readily accepted of his offers. This made a terrible scene between the lovers, upon which my Lord Jedburgh went to my Lord Oxford and gave him the account I have written. My Lord Oxford said he would acquaint the Duke of Leeds with it and it is certain the Duke of Leeds is gone into Yorkshire a few days ago.

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

This is the account on my Lord Jedburgh's side. What I am going to write is from my Lady Fitzwalter's family and friends: that she never saw my Lord Jedburgh at her house nor ever knew one syllable of this matter till the proposal of the Duke of Leeds was over, when my Lady Caroline came to her and begged her pardon for not having told her that she was engaged to my Lord Jedburgh and that she would never marry anybody else. It is said that there has been a correspondence carried on by somebody a long time between my Lady Caroline and my Lord Jedburgh. Which of these stories is true I do not know, but I am sure I would not let you have danced about with anybody that I thought an improper match for you. They say my Lady Fitzwalter is in great affliction. I think whatever truth there is in either of the stories, my Lord Jedburgh at last must have the lady. And they say she has written to him lately to desire that he would depend upon her and that she would never marry anybody else.

Your brother John is in town, and I have seen his boy, which is a very strong lusty child. But I cannot see anything of the resemblance they speak of to his father. But I think, as much as one can judge of so little a child, that he is like my Lord Carteret and that family, and if he makes a good man and is healthy I do not much care whom he is like.

I go to Wimbledon to-morrow to see some furniture and carry John with me. And I have sent your brother Marlborough to see if he likes to meet us there. Your brother John goes upon Friday to my Lodge at Windsor, stays there some days, then goes to Rookley, where he is to continue till winter.

I am ever yours and the Duke of Bedford's,

S. MARLBOROUGH

The admission by Charles, third Earl of Peterborough, of his marriage to the singer, Anastasia Robinson, had been a fine tit-bit for the fashionable gossips, especially by reason of the manner in which it had been made. The marriage had, so it was said, taken place as far back as 1722, but Lord Peterborough's 'haughty spirit', to quote Mrs. Delaney, which, also in that lady's words, 'made him a very awful [*sic*] husband' refused to allow any declaration to be made in public. But now in what proved to be

his last illness — he died the following October — he had been persuaded to make amends to the woman who had for so long been his unacknowledged, and faithful wife. At a gathering in Bath according to one tale — probably the one which Sarah had heard — or, if Mrs. Delaney is to be credited, in his nephew's apartments at St. James's Palace, the noble lord had presented Mrs. Robinson to the company as his lawful wife, in the course of a eulogy so touching, that, hearing it, the newly recognized Countess, 'not having been appraised of his intention', had fainted away.

Lady Caroline D'Arcy was the daughter of the sixth Earl of Holderness and stepdaughter of Earl Fitzwalter. She eventually married Lord Jedburgh, with a dowry of £20,000, on November 6th following.

Little John Spencer, the future Earl Spencer, was now eight months old. He had been born on December 19th of the previous year.

It is possible, between the letter which was written on the last day of July and the next that Sarah may have been to see Diana at Woburn:

Thursday  
August 7th, 1735

Your letter, my dear Cordelia, of the 5th of August was a double pleasure to me; because it was what I did not expect, and what I believe no person that is now living would have thought of doing but yourself.

Notwithstanding, I have had the same way of acting as yours has been to me, with all those that I ever loved; but you are charming in all your thoughts and actions. And it is that which makes it so heavy to me at this time while I am under apprehensions that your health is not as I wish it. I am very glad that you will go into the air on every fine day, for I am sure that must do you good, and it is impossible that can do you any hurt. For there is no more reason to apprehend any danger from careful chairmen carrying you up and down broad stairs than there is to go into a house, because there is a possibility that a beam may fall. But the air will create an appetite, and help to



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

make a good digestion and cause good juices. What alarms me most is, that tho' you eat enough to support anybody sufficiently, yet it is plain that it does not turn to nourishment by your falling away so much every day. People with child will look extremely ill and pale, and that perhaps may proceed in some degree from want of being in the air. But I find Mr. Garnier thinks the purging has never quite ceased, and that is enough to make anybody fall away for so many months as you have had it. I do not wonder at all that you do not appear bigger for the reason you give. It is not natural for any great bigness to appear in four months, when a person is very tall and very lean. And you are the best judge, whether you found no more alterations as to your breasts, when you was with child before in four months. But as you have but a month more to have patience, and by which time I hope you will be convinced of what I so much wish, it would not be reasonable, I think to do anything that can possibly hurt you. And whether this great change comes from being with child or any other cause, I think nothing can be done safely, but what is good to strengthen the stomach and make a good digestion; which, to be sure is right whether you was with child or no.

I will not trouble Dr. Carleton more at this time than to desire you to give him a great many thanks for his letter. One thing there is in it that is very comfortable, which is, that you have no feverish heats. And tho' Jane said you did cough sometimes, yet, as I did not hear you once in six or seven hours, I hope there is no present danger to be apprehended from that. I am sure you will continue to let me have an account of you, by all opportunities. While I am in these apprehensions I could wish not to think of you. But that is impossible, for whoever is with me or whatever I am obliged to do, my dear Cordelia is always in my mind.

The shadow was creeping up the horizon. If Sarah had seen Diana, as seems likely, it was perhaps during the visit that she had offered — perhaps in answer to a request — to send a tent over to Woburn from Holywell House, in order that the sick girl might sit out in the garden under its shelter and enjoy the open air — Sarah had great belief in the beneficial effect of the open air:

August 16th, 1735

Yours of yesterday has given me the greatest satisfaction imaginable, my dear Cordelia, and I hope it cannot be a month longer before I shall be entirely satisfied.

John Griffith goes to Windsor to-morrow to look out all that belongs to the Turkish tent and will have it ready packed up with orders to the servants at the lodge to deliver it to your carter when he comes for it. He tells me there is some brass thing lost which fastened the tent together, and when he set it up at Windsor Lodge he fastened it some way or other by tying it with ropes. This, some of your people will find the way of doing till you can get what is lost made; and I hope they will be ingenious enough to find out what I am not able to direct. He tells me there is a carpet to put upon a table and a great carpet to lay upon the ground; that I think is very necessary. Some of the chairs he says the rats have made holes in, and as I remember, are whimsical odd things; but you will put in what you like better.

I find, by a letter which I had this day from your brother, that he did lend the Duke of St. Albans a key to walk through the park, which I think was natural enough when he asked it of him. But none but the greatest fool and wretch in the world, as the Duke of St. Albans certainly is, would ask favour in any place where those he has used so very unhandsomely have the power; and at the same time endeavour to take away the right which I certainly have in that park. I think I shall let this matter rest and do nothing in it till I hear from his Grace of Newcastle. Tho' I have a mind sometimes to turn out the cows; it is so extremely impertinent in her Grace or his Grace, (I know not which) to put anything there without anybody's leave. And to aggravate it more when it is so known a thing, the ill usage I have had from her family.

I have been at Wimbledon all day and shall go to-morrow again. The principal floor is now entirely furnished; but I want a great many conveniences still to be done.

I am ever yours, my dear Cordelia. My humble service to the Duke of Bedford.

The tent with its furnishings was none other, as a later letter

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

shows, than that which John Churchill had used on his campaigns. Sarah says she had used it at Windsor many years before. Also when the Duke had been at Holywell House, in the summer of 1712, he had given a great feast on the anniversary of Blenheim and had caused the tent, once pitched on the battlefield, then to be pitched on the bowling green of his English home. On the green the tent had stood during the remainder of the summer; inspections was permitted at a fee of sixpence a head.<sup>1</sup> Lediard writing his *Life of John Duke of Marlborough* described the tent as a fine piece of Arras work.<sup>2</sup>

But even in anxiety which was deepening into apprehension, Sarah could still spare attention for other matters. She had just now a fine quarrel — it was an old, not a new quarrel — on her hands and she made no bones about saying precisely what she thought:

I thank you, my dear Cordelia, for yours of the 17th which has given me a great deal of ease and satisfaction. I think it is not possible for you to grow bigger and be better in your health and not be with child. Therefore I conclude you are as I wish and that the great change I observed in your looks has proceeded from the violent long purging and being with child before you had recovered your strength after your first illness. I do not at all wonder that you feel nothing stir because I know that I never did of any of my children till twenty weeks, for I always went twenty weeks after, and I think you cannot be sure that you were with child quite so soon as you reckoned.

I find by John Griffith that you will not have the tent as soon as I thought, for, tho' it was packed up upon Saturday the carter did not design to carry it away till Monday, and I am sure he might have set out at five or six upon Sunday and then you would have had it at Woburn upon Monday night.

I wish it may be of any use and please you, but I think the chief value of it is, to think that it was your dear Grandfather's tent, when he did such wonderful things to secure the nation from being enslaved by the French king, besides the great pro-

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 568.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

visions he made for his whole family, all which I think should make his memory dear to every one of them and to those who set a right value upon the liberty and the laws of their country.

You tell me you need not trouble me with what your brother says concerning the Duke of St. Albans affair because he is coming to town and besides he has written to me which he did. But he made the post coming out soon, a pretence to say nothing in answer to my letter but that the Duke of St. Albans has a key of the park lent him and that the Duchess, his mother, has a door into the park, that she can shut up or open as she pleases. He added that John has two keys and another Gentleman has one by Lord Godolphin's desire, and that he can call back these keys if I think it proper, and in the meantime order the keepers to put padlocks on the gates, which will prevent his attempting to come in; and for cows being there, he never gave any leave, nor knows nothing of their being in the park. This is all the letter and I cannot find by it whether he approved of mine to the Duke of Newcastle. As he did let him, the Duke of Newcastle, have a key, I am glad I did not send to have the locks altered as many would have done upon such usage as I have received from the Duke in a place where he has nothing to do.

You have the letter I wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, which was in answer to the message your brother brought me himself, in which he proposed that the Duke of St. Albans should have a key and did imply that he had none, tho' he had given him one. I must own I think your brother should have told me that he had given him one, for, as it must appear to me, there never was so strong a thing, as after the locks were altered upon wrong things done, for him to make new keys as he has done for general people, one of which is for his own gamekeeper, a man that has been very impudent to me. The Duchess of St. Albans, having a door out of her house, is nothing to this purpose, for nobody would hinder her from walking into the park, or any company that was with her, but to put in cattle without my leave is something very new and odd, as it is to show any great regard to those that have been so publicly rude to me, as the Duke of St. Albans has been and his brother, Lord Sydney.

But to pass all that over, I think it was ungentlemanlike after

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

the Duke of Marlborough had been so civil to the Duke of St. Albans as to let him have a key for his own use to make others by it; and to give them to whom he pleased; and put cattle into it as if he had the command of my grant, and to apply to the King or Queen for power to do it.

I think giving a key to any Gentleman that Lord Godolphin desired should have a key, was reasonable, and likewise I have nothing to say against those that John or your brother had a mind to oblige. But then such people should make a right use of such civilities and not turn it into an abuse by making more keys for their acquaintance. This is the truth of this whole matter and I cannot but think my notions of them are reasonable.

I do not complain of the Duke of Marlborough's not answering my letters, because I have been so long used to it, and from my experience I see that it is impossible for me to do anything to oblige him, tho' my endeavours have been to do it upon all occasions, but in vain, for he never writes to me but as one would do to an enemy or at least to one that was mud and that he wanted to get rid of the trouble of hearing from as soon as he could possibly do it. But being sure I have never failed in acting a very kind part, I am now very well contented as to that.

I know you will not agree with me in anything I have written upon this subject, from your very great partiality which I cannot but think is wrong, for if those one loves has a weakness or fault I think one can see it as well as if it were in those that one does not love. The only difference is that one wishes others may not see it, for one can love nobody I fear, if one cannot pass over some faults, or at least what would be better if it were otherwise; but to defend anything that is not to be justified is of no use to anybody.

I have heard nothing more from the Duke of Newcastle tho' he wrote he would acquaint the Queen in a few days and let me know her Majesty's pleasure, and all those things put together, makes me under some difficulty how to act.

Pray make my compliments all round and believe that I am most passionately yours.

The quarrel with the Duke of St. Albans — he was Charles,

the second Duke—was part of the running dispute which absorbed so much of Sarah's time and energy as Ranger of the Park at Windsor—and incidentally must also have been a tax upon those of the Duke during the four years in which he had held the offices of governor of the Castle and Warden of the Forest. Sarah had always resented his driving—and still more his relatives' driving—through the park. This, she declared, was a privilege which was, outside the royal family, reserved for herself alone, by virtue of her position as Ranger. The question of the keys—who had a right to them, how that right was to be exercised and were the keys to be passed on to others—all the hoary old causes of disagreement ever since locks and keys had first been invented—was continued in Sarah's next:

Marlborough House

August 21st, 1735

I thank you, my dear Cordelia, for yours of the 19th and for the very comfortable account you give me of the way you are in. I cannot help thinking it was your carter's fault that you had not the tent on Monday night; for he might have left Windsor on Sunday evening and such a tent cannot be I think 1/10 of a load.

I was yesterday at Wimbledon from 10 in the morning till eight at night, and I want but very little to make that place complete according to my own taste. Mr. Bridgman went with me to take measures to make the way from the common to the house. He tells me it will be done in a month, and will be a vast addition to the place. The people thereabouts use me very ill, destroy all my game, and come into the very park and gardens to do it.

I remember a great while ago I signed some papers, a great employment for the Duke of Bedford and, if I remember right, he called it being my gamekeeper. I suppose it will be no diminution of that great power if I add an ordinary man that lives on the spot, and give him a deputation to watch and prevent these people from doing me so much mischief.

You will observe in the copy of the letter I sent you on Tuesday last, that the Duke of Newcastle has changed his

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

style concerning the Duke of St. Albans' affair. The message your brother brought was, as if it was a right and of use for him to go into the park to survey the fortifications. But now that is dropped, and it is called only a favour, not a right, which the Queen could not refuse him. I am not yet determined whether I shall make any reply to the Duke's letter; for I am satisfied it will signify nothing if I do. Sometimes I think I might ask her Majesty to explain how far the favour is to extend, in order to be exact in obeying her commands. Whether she means his Grace should have a liberty of going through; or whether he is to give keys to all his acquaintance that anybody's coach is to come through as he allows of. And the Duchess of St. Albans, who has a door to come in herself, which will make the park that used to be like a garden, like the road out of Grosvenor Street into Hyde Park. And indeed, what is designed can be of no use but to the Duchess of St. Albans' house. For the Duke of St. Albans cannot go in his coach out of the park to the keep, and there is no man of quality that lives in the Castle or woman in the town of Windsor that may not, with as much reason, desire this favour of coming into the little park in their coaches.

When I first knew Windsor, Prince Rupert had the keep. My Lord Carteret had it likewise; and the Duke of Northumberland for many years. None of which ever pretended to have anything to do with the park. The Duke of Northumberland was the King's son by a woman a good deal better than Nel Gwin, the Duke of St. Albans' mother, and an actress in the playhouse. But the Duke of Northumberland never pretended to any property but the ditch round the keep where his Duchess kept rabbits and chickens, which was suffered, tho' it was shameful. Perhaps, that might be complied with upon account of the great inclination that the Duchess might have to poultry, her father having made her knowing in that trade.

I am apt to think that the Duke of Marlborough's great civility to the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans in this affair, in giving them first a key without telling it first to me has encouraged them to attempt all these disagreeable things. I believe there is no dispute that the King may make his park as

common as the road, but I do not think, without breaking the law, the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans can put cows into the park, which I have a strong grant of. But there are very few things worth contending for. I am only sorry that I gave my Lord Godolphin more than this lodge was worth for no reason but to please the Duke of Marlborough. It would have been more easy to me if he had kept it; for then I should have had no sort of trouble in it. The keeper told me, that they refused to let in beasts without my orders. And as they were driven in afterwards through the Duke of Marlborough's yards, I think that showed they knew I would not be disagreeable to him.

Mr. Bridgeman was Charles, the second son of the fourth baronet and surveyor of the royal gardens. Just now he was occupied in laying out the Serpentine and the gardens around.

The appeal to the Duke of Newcastle was by virtue of his office of secretary of state for the south. He also stood in the same relation to Sarah as did the Duke of Bedford, for he also had married one of her granddaughters. His wife was Henrietta, daughter of the Earl of Godolphin and Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough.

Sarah was not above hitting out at the origin of the Dukedom of St. Albans. The Duke of Northumberland — also the son of Charles II, by Barbara, Lady Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland — had been constable and ranger of Windsor between 1701 and 1714. His wife, whom he had married clandestinely, had been the widow of one Thomas Long of Lambeth and, so it was said, the daughter of a poulterer named Wheatley whose shop was near the Fleet Bridge.

The letter was not ended:

It is too long to give you an account of a most comical description which I had yesterday of what is called Merlin's Cave at Richmond, which they say is ten thousand times more ridiculous than what was done before for the philosophers. Merlin, it seems, was a Welsh conjuror. I do not read romances, but they say it is taken out of Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, and there are a great many strange puppets dressed up in it that attend



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

them. Mrs. Pointz and Miss Paget are two, and I know not how many more, to attend the conjuror. These pretty diversions look as if we had no need to apprehend danger from France, since Her Majesty appeared so extremely easy.

The curiosity which someone had been to see, and of which he or she had given a description to Sarah, was the grotto which had been constructed, by command of Queen Caroline in the Old Park at Richmond. It had been set up, reported the *Gentleman's Magazine*, during June. Now, in August, it was being furnished according to the taste of Her Majesty; a taste which Sarah had observed reflected in the Sundon painting. Here, at Richmond were books, for the grotto was to serve as library, and a librarian and keeper had been appointed in the person of Mr. Stephen Duck. An array of busts, of Locke, Boyle, Newton, Woolaston and — needless to say, seeing that it was for Her Majesty that the whole was being planned — one of Dr. Clarke, represented philosophy and science. And figures, too, were there, symbolic figures, taken from *Britomart*. There stood Merlin, for whom Mr. Ernest, one of the royal pages, had been the model; there, seeking instruction from the magician, was Queen Elizabeth featured upon Miss Paget, of the royal household; while Mrs. Poyntz, also of the household, had sat for Minerva. And the *Gentleman's Magazine*, proud of its knowledge of Spenser's poem, was in ecstasies.

Meantime, at Woburn, doctors came and went — the grandmother waiting for news of what they had said, still trusting that the illness might be a natural one:

Monday

August 25, 1735

I give you millions of thanks, my dear Cordelia, for your letter of the 24th which has eased me of great part of my pains, but still I wonder you should be so very uneasy after dinner if your stays are not made too long waived. Though I remember when I was within three months of my reckoning, I could never endure to wear any bodice at all; but wore a warm waistcoat wrapped about me like a man's, and tied my petticoats on the top of it. And from that time never went abroad but with a long black scarf to hide me. I was so prodigious big.

SUMMER — AUTUMN, 1735

It was extremely good in you to write to me when you sent to Dr. Hollins, for if I had heard of his going there without knowing the cause of it, I should have been terrified to death. I hope in God I shall hear by him that you still grow better; but I cannot expect he should return before this letter must go by the post.

Here a letter is missing. One from Diana to Sarah may have given, probably did give, a worse report of her health. The next from Sarah, dictated and unsigned, was a short one:

Thursday  
August 28th, 1735

Having written to you yesterday, my dear Cordelia, by your servant I have nothing that is new to say to you; but I cannot miss a post and I beg of you not to lose a day in coming to Town; for I am very sure it is of vast consequence for you to be here. I intended to have gone for a few days to have ordered some thing at Blenheim; but I am resolved I will not stir till I have seen you and know the certainty of what you will do.

Diana was brought up, as Sarah wished she might be, to Bedford House. How often the grandmother saw her before the end is not known. It is doubtful whether the young wife had really, as she herself and those around her had supposed, been pregnant. But whether this was so or not, certain symptoms had been misapprehended, and what had been taken to be a natural illness was now seen to be a galloping consumption. She lingered until September 27th, and then, on that day, she died. *'Died at Southampton House in Bloomsbury Square'* recorded the *Historical Register*, using the old name of the house, *'in the twenty-sixth year of her age, of a consumption, the most noble Diana, duchess of Bedford'*.

To that notice, in repeating it, the *Gentleman's Magazine* added: *'she was amiable and graceful in her person. In her temper, generous and affable, compassionate to the poor, by all beloved; and most tenderly by her grandmother, the Duchess of Marlborough and by her noble Consort the Duke.'*

It was the customary eulogy, but it may well have been true of the girl who had won, and had kept, Sarah's affection. It is

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as seen through the aura of that affection that Diana lives on. The letters — there must have been many of them — which she wrote to her grandmother, were, according to a sentence in one of the latter's own letters — a letter not reproduced here — burnt, after they had been read through a second time.<sup>1</sup> No letter she may have written to her husband survives, as far as is known. Nor can any single thing that may have been her own personal possession be identified. But on the walls of Woburn Abbey two pictures of her hang among the other family portraits. The one is attributed to Thomas Hudson. In the other she is wearing what Sarah would have described as an antique dress. This picture is catalogued as a copy of one at Blenheim and it may therefore be the portrait which Mr. Whood copied from that he had made her grandmother.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But cf. p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Scharf, however, in his *Catalogue of Pictures at Blenheim Palace*, p. 185, speaks of the portrait there being by Hudson and says Diana's dress is copied from a well-known portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria. Also in his *Catalogue of Pictures at Woburn Abbey*, p. 153, he attributes the copy to A. S. Longdon.



*DIANA SPENCER youngest D.  
of CHARLES 2<sup>d</sup> EARL of SUNDERLAND  
and 1<sup>st</sup> Wife of JOHN 4<sup>th</sup> DUKE of BEDFORD*

DIANA DUCHESS OF BEDFORD



## EPILOGUE

THE scrap of a letter, unsigned, dated August 28th, is the last letter, as far as is known, sent by Sarah to Diana. But in the volume which contains the correspondence another letter has been bound up. It is addressed to the Duke of Bedford and was dictated by Sarah, at Marlborough House, on March 16th, 1737, eighteen months after Diana's death. 'My Lord', said Sarah,

As your Grace has given yourself the trouble to write something out of my letter, which you say is dated the 26th October 1735, and which you think I have forgotten, I think it not improper for me to relate that fact.

I seldom keep copies of my own letters; but I remember very well that I did write to Mr. Hetherington to desire the tent might be returned, being very certain that your Grace would never make use of it as a soldier. And without that reason I might have well expected your Grace would have sent it home to me, for I never gave it to your Grace, tho' you say in your letter I did. But I have one from my dear grandchild, who wrote to me to borrow it, that she might sit in the air, wherever it was most convenient to put up this tent. I sent it to her immediately and had she lived, I believe I should never have desired it again. According to the custom of the world, it was very natural for the Duke of Marlborough's family to like to have a tent, which their grandfather had made use of in so many pitched battles. And writing something to this purpose to Mr. Hetherington, your Grace was pleased to return it, which was nothing but calico and canvas, and of no manner of value. But as I have mentioned above, your Grace, I do believe, has made a mistake in saying that in this letter to Mr. Hetherington I said 'I would never make any further demand upon your Grace', which is so very odd an expression, that I do not believe it and I am very sure that I never gave your Grace the tent, as you say, nor once thought of you in that matter. It is very probable I might say, that if he obtained the sending of this tent, I would trouble him with no other request,

## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

or to that purpose. But the word, demand, I think must be your Grace's and not mine, for as the tent was in your possession you could keep it, which you did not think proper to do, being a thing of no sort of value to your Grace.

You say, that having stated matters of fact you will now declare *that, as I gave your Grace my picture standing in Bedford Hall you will never part with it.* This requires some answer to it; for I never gave your Grace that picture. But I did give it to my dear granddaughter which makes it as much in your power to keep it, as if it had been true that I gave it to you, and I have her letters to show that she wrote to me that it was to be sold at an auction, and desired that I would bid for it, for she was very desirous to have it. I wrote immediately to her to employ somebody to bid, and without stint, and I sent her the money to pay for it. It is so common a thing when anybody in a family is dead, to whom alone a picture was of value, to have such pictures given back to the family, where it might be acceptable, and that I had not any doubt but Mr. Hetherington would have prevailed with your Grace to grant my request which was only to pay for my picture, and at the same time to make room for one, much more proper, to stand in that place.

And there is one instance that has happened lately; my Lord Masham, has sent without solicitation, to John Spencer his mother's picture, which I gave his wife. I do not write this with any hope of succeeding, because everybody who has the honour of knowing your Grace agrees that you have such a talent for, and strength in arguments, that in all combats of that nature, you support your opinion and never yet yielded to anybody. So that what I say is purely to do myself right. And since your Grace is upon facts, I will take the liberty to repeat some that you know to be all true.

I never did anything in my life to disoblige you, except in not being prevailed upon to lose the natural right I had to choose my family at Woodstock, the consequence of which would have been to have put that borough into the power of Sir Robert Walpole, to have chosen whom he would. And I must have depended on my family's being chosen in Bedfordshire by your Grace, who had very little interest there; and have courted the Duke of Kent who is my enemy, to have assisted

## EPILOGUE

you in choosing John Spencer, after he had given up what he was sure never to have been disturbed in. I know your Grace's eloquence can say a great deal to defend your dislike to me upon this account, but people, that have only common understandings, will not easily be convinced that I was to blame. The storm upon this happened to blow over, and your Grace lived with me in the same manner as formerly, till the sad scene happened at Bedford House, and I believe there is no instance of such a treatment as I went thro' considering the great tenderness I had in my heart for the Duchess of Bedford; which your Grace knew very well, and that I must have more experience than anybody about her. It would be too much to repeat the monstrous usage which I received, which several people were witnesses of, and wondered at my patience. But I sat silently in outward rooms, bathed in tears; and I own I flattered you upon every occasion that offered; which was out of fear, that if I did not take that way, you would order the porter not to let me in. And this was natural to expect from such a behaviour as your Grace's.

Some time after the fatal stroke was given, finding you took no notice of the jewels lent at your marriage, to save your Grace's money, I sent to put you in mind of them, and I received a letter from your Grace, which I have by me, which plainly shows that you had a mind to keep them. But Mr. Hetherington having seen that was impossible, from a will to which he was a witness, in which it was expressed that she should have my jewels, and at least £100,000 more, with power to give it all away to your children, if she had any by you. But if she died before me (which was very unlikely to have happened) all that was given her in that will was to have returned to my own family. And your Grace knows besides this, that I have given her Wimbledon, which I built and furnished for her, and which altogether has cost £70,000. These things were so demonstrated that your Grace did at last bring the jewels and a duplicate of an inventory I had kept of the jewels your wife had at marriage, which showed likewise that your Grace knew from the beginning that what you had a mind to keep was not yours. And yet all this extraordinary kindness of mine to your wife for which she was to be much



## LETTERS OF A GRANDMOTHER

the better, did not hinder you from making use of your great dexterity in contriving a way to defeat me of a kind legacy, that my dear child told me herself she had left me with the most tender expressions. And it was not worth above £100. But the value of it was, that she had worn it. She begged of me to wear it for her sake and remember her for ever. Several of her friends that were with her, knew this to be true, as there is no doubt your Grace did too.

The earlier letter to which Sarah alludes has disappeared. It was said — by Lord Hervey, among others — that even before Diana had been laid in her grave at Chenies her grandmother had begun to worry the Duke's life out of him by her demands, particularly for the return of the jewels which she had given Diana.<sup>1</sup> She was, said Lord Hervey, more concerned for these than for the loss of her granddaughter. In this he was certainly unjust to the old lady. But, on her own showing, she had made trouble within a few weeks of Diana's death. Now her quarrel with the Duke flared up again, quite possibly because she had learned that the young man — he was yet only twenty-seven years of age — was about to marry again. His second wife was to be Gertrude Leveson Gower, daughter of Earl Gower.

It would seem from this letter that Sarah had certainly got the jewels back as also she had received back the tent. Her own picture was not returned. It remained in the hall in Bedford House in Bloomsbury until in the year 1800 the house itself was pulled down. Then Sarah's portrait with others was brought to Woburn to be let into the wall of a room — one of Flitcroft's rooms — that neither she nor Diana ever saw.

It is not surprising that she should drag once more into the light of day the annoyance she had felt with the Duke when he had

<sup>1</sup> While this book was in proof the Earl Spencer most kindly sent me the following copy of a note in Sarah's own hand, inserted in a list, in his possession, of her jewels: 'Since the list was made, I gave the Duke of Bedford the large diamond ring given by the Emperor. . . . The diamond given me by Queen Ann, I gave to Diana, Duchess of Bedford. . . . Diamonds and Pearls that are wanting to make up what I had were used to fit up those jewels the Duke of Bedford gave at his marriage which were very imperfect — a necklace that wanted many pearls and some little diamonds.'

## EPILOGUE

thwarted some of her plans for the election in Bedfordshire three years earlier. Sarah was far from exempt from that failing of the human temper which resurrects a past grievance in order to fortify a present contention.

But it is the final accusation, flung at the head of the Duke, which calls up a picture of the scenes — and they may well have been terrible scenes — that had taken place in Bedford House during those days when all hope for Diana's life was rapidly ebbing away. It was an epoch when the emotions — those aroused by the lesser as well as the greater happenings of human life — were given full play. And Sarah, of all people, may well in this poignant moment have abandoned all self-control.

And now, a year and a half later, in bitterness of spirit, she took her leave of the Duke.

I come now to the conclusion of your letter, which seems to me to have a double meaning and jesuitical; that you are with due respect, etc. But I am so sincere, that I will end with saying that I wish I could with truth profess I had any respect for you: which I do not think anybody that reads this account can really have, since there is not one tittle aggravated but a great many things omitted of the same nature, to save tediousness, and, therefore, I am sure your Grace in your own mind, will excuse me for saying no more than that I am,

Your Grace's

most humble servant,

S. MARLBOROUGH

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